Bookworm & Toothless (Stranger Things AU) by CarrieWrites

Series: Bookworm & Toothless (My Stranger Things AU Series) [1]

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M

Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Lucas Sinclair,

Michael Wheeler, Original Female Character(s), Will Byers

Relationships: Dustin Henderson/Original Female Character(s),

Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler

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Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

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Summary:

Jessica Hernandez.

Best friends with Mike Wheeler, Will Byers, Lucas Sinclair and Dustin Henderson

A real pottymouth.

Known as the Scholar of the group.

Or 'Bookworm' to Troy and his 'minions'.

She doesn't like to admit it but, she has a die-hard crush on the boy who loves chocolate pudding.

So when Will goes missing and a girl by the name 'Eleven' appears mysteriously, she becomes more cautious on what might happen as stranger things start to appear more and more often.

Author's Note:

I decided to bring my Stranger Things Fanfic from Wattpad to ArchiveOfOurOwn!

Jessica was pedaling her bike to the Wheelers, her long dark brown hair flying behind her in a tight ponytail.

She had on her backpack full of books and novels she liked to read just in case the boys decided not to play D&D at the last minute like LAST TIME.

She sighed, as she arrived at the house, getting off her bike and pushing it to the side where three other bikes were.

She knocked on the door, biting her lip.

Mrs. Wheeler opened the door, smiling at the brunette.

"Jessica! So glad you're here. The boys are down in the basement."

The girl smiled, her dimples showing.

"Thanks, Mrs. Wheeler," she says, her heavy Latin accent showing.

She heads in, walking to the door to the basement.

She grins when she sees the four boys sitting around a board.

"¡Hola chicos!" she yelled, causing them to turn their heads, all of them grinning.

"Jess is here!" Mike cheered, getting up and tackling her into a hug.

"Hey Mike!" she laughed, hugging him.

"You brought your books? Really?" Lucas asked, smiling and shaking his head.

"Well, I didn't know if you were going to blow D&D off like the LAST

TIME we all came here to hang out so I came prepared," she says, shrugging.

"We don't call you our 'Scholar' for nothing!" Dustin says, grinning, making Jessica blush.

"Of course not Dustin, I nearly beat up Mike to give me that name," she says, grinning at Mike.

He rolls his eyes, smiling.

"So we ready to play?" Will asked, looking at Mike.

"If Jess is, then yup."

Jess smiled.

"LETS FUCKING PLAY!" she yelled, causing the boys to laugh.

X

"Something is coming. Something hungry for blood." Mike says dramatically, causing Jess to listen intently, careful not to miss a word.

"A shadow grows on the wall behind you, swallowing you in darkness."

Will and Jess look at each other, Jess smirking, revealing that she already knew what it was.

"It is almost here."

"What is it?" Will asked.

"What if it's the Demogorgon?" Dustin asked, causing Jess to roll her eyes.

"Oh, Jesus, we're so screwed if it's the Demogorgon."

"It's not the Demogorgon," Lucas argued.

"It is the Demogorgon," Jess argued back, causing Lucas to roll his

eyes.

"An army of troglodytes charge into the chamber!" Mike announced, slamming the board.

Jess rolled her eyes as Lucas smirked at her.

"You were saying?"

"Troglodytes?" Dustin asks incredulously, staring at Jess.

"Told ya." Lucas teased.

She knew this charade Mike was playing but she wasn't going to say anything.

"Wait a minute..." Mike says softly, causing Jess to smirk.

"Did you hear that? That....that sound?"

Will noticed Jess' smirk growing bigger and bigger as Mike continued on.

"Boom...boom...BOOM!" Mike yells, slamming the table, everyone but Jess flinching.

"That didn't come from the troglodytes. No, that...that came from something else."

Jess grins at Lucas and Dustin's glances at each other.

Mike suddenly slams a figure on the table. It's-

"THE DEMOGORGON!" Mike announced, causing the boys to groan.

"You were saying?" Jess teased Lucas.

"Shut up." he snapped, causing her to laugh.

"Never doubt your Scholar." she sighs, watching the boys bicker.

"We're in deep shit." Dustin groaned.

"Will, your action!" Mike told Will.

"I don't know!"

"Fireball him!" Lucas yelled.

"I'd have to roll a 13 or higher!"

"Too risky. Cast a protection spell." Dustin argued.

"Don't be a pussy. Fireball him!"

"Cast Protection."

"The Demogorgon is tired of your silly human bickering!" Mike interrupts, causing the boys to shut up, making Jess giggle.

"It stomps towards you. Boom!"

"Fireball him!"

"Another stomp, boom!"

"Cast Protection."

"He roars in anger!"

The boys are yelling all at once and Will is unable to decide.

Jess decided to play mercy and whisper in his ear;

"Fireball the fucker."

With the majority deciding Fireball, he rolls the dice and yells, "Fireball!"

However, the dice fell on the floor, the entertainment for Jess ending.

"Oh shit!"

"¡Ay mierda!" Jess cursed, getting up.

"Where'd it go?" Lucas asked.

"Where is it?"

"I don't know!" Will exclaimed.

"Is it a 13?" Dustin asked.

"I don't know!"

"Where is it?"

"Oh, my god!" Dustin panicked, causing Jess to turn to the boy with the curly hair.

"Dustin, calm down!" she says, walking towards him.

"Mike!"

"Can you find it yet?" Lucas asked.

"Mike!"

"No, I can't find it!"

"Mike!"

Mike looks up, and see his mom standing on the stairs leading to the basement.

"Mom, we're in the middle of a campaign!"

"You mean the end? Fifteen after."

"Oh my god! Freaking idiot!" Lucas yelled.

"Why do we have to go?" Will groaned.

Jess sighed as Mike went up the stairs, trying to talk his mom into giving them a couple more minutes.

"Oh, I got it!" Will exclaimed, causing Jess to turn and walk up to him.

"Does the seven count?"

Jess groaned, getting on her jacket.

"It was a seven? Did Mike see it?" Lucas asked.

Will shook his head no.

"Then it doesn't count."

Jess put on her backpack while the boys put on their jackets.

"Hey guys, does anyone want this?" Dustin asked, holding the pizza box.

"No." The boys say.

"Normally I would but, ugh, I'm so full." Jess sighs, clutching her stomach.

"Wanna see if Nancy wants it?" he asked, causing Jess to snort.

"I highly doubt that she would but, it wouldn't hurt to ask."

X

The two walked up the stairs, Jess reading Stephen King's 'Carrie' on the way up.

"No, I don't think..."

Jess shot her head up to see the high schooler talking on the phone.

"Yeah, he's cute."

Dustin waved as Jess marked the page she was in and placed it back in her backpack.

"Barb, no, I don't think so."

Jess rolled her eyes as Nancy didn't notice her or Dustin's presence.

"Barb, you're not-"

"Hey, Nancy," Dustin says catching her attention.

"There's a slice left if you want it."

Her eyes dart to the brunette that had her hand on the boy's shoulder, looking at him gently while giving her a glare.

"Sausage and Pepperoni!"

"Hold on," she says before getting off the bed, causing Jess to give her a warning glare.

'Cute.' Nancy chuckled in her head as she gave them both a smile, Dustin smiling at her as she walked to the door.

She then slams it in their faces.

Jess rolls her eyes and flips off the door.

X

"There's something wrong with your sister," Dustin says to Mike when they both walk outside.

"Terribly wrong." Jess agrees.

"What are you two talking about?"

"She's got a stick up her butt," Dustin says.

"She's being an asshole," Jess adds.

"Yeah. It's because she's dating that douchebag, Steve Harrington." Lucas says, causing Jess widen her eyes.

"She's dating that motherfucker?!" she exclaimed.

"Yeah, she's turning into a real jerk," Dustin says as they all got on their bikes.

"She's always been a real jerk," Mike argued.

"No, not really," Jess argued back.

"Nuh-uh, she used to be cool. Like the time she dressed like an elf for

our Elder tree campaign."

"Four years ago!" Mike called.

"Still a valid point!" Jess calls as she rode with Dustin.

"Just saying!" Dustin calls.

"Later," Lucas says as they rode off.

X

"Goodnight ladies and gentleman," Lucas says as he got to his house.

"Night Sinclair!" Jess calls back.

"Kiss your mom 'night for me," Dustin says, causing Jess to giggle.

As she got to her house, she turned to the two boys.

"Night boys! Love you!" she yelled, sticking her tongue out.

"Night Jess! Love you too!" they both called out, sticking their tongues out.

As she rode into the garage, pushing her bike aside, she had no idea what the events that will unfold later in the night and following couple days.

Summary for the Chapter:

After a run in with Troy and his 'minion', Jess and the boys learn that Will is missing.

Jess was riding her bike to school, grinning at Dustin who now had caught up.

"¡Buenas días Dustin!"

"¡Buenas días Jess!"

"¡Buenas días chicas!" Lucas says, causing Jess to stick out her tongue.

"Shut up Lucas!" Jess laughs.

X

As the four of them (Mike had joined them as soon as they passed his street) went to park their bikes, Jess bit her lip, looking for Will.

"That's weird. I don't see him.

"I'm telling you, his mom's right. He probably just went to class early again." Lucas says, walking with the group.

"Yeah, he's always paranoid Gursky's gonna give him another pop quiz." Dustin laughs.

"Step right up, ladies and gentlemen."

Jess groans, turning to see Troy and his minion.

"Step right up and get your tickets for the freak show."

Jess rolls her eyes, squaring her jaw.

"Who do you think would make more money in a freak show?"

Troy walks up to the group.

"Midnight, Frogface, Toothless, or Bookworm?" he asks, hitting the each of them on the shoulder.

Jess rolled her eyes at her name.

It wasn't even an insult!

"I'd go with Toothless." his minion says, mimicking Dustin's slur.

Jess' hands turned into fists, her face going bright red in anger.

"I told you a million times, my teeth are coming in. It's called cleidocranial dysplasia." Dustin says, clearly getting tired of explaining his birth defect.

"I told you a million times." The minion continued to mimic.

"Do the arm thing."

Jess growled, her teeth baring.

"Do it, freak!"

Dustin sighs, removing his jacket.

He stretched out his arms, making it pop.

The boys groaned, wincing.

Jess rolled her eyes at them being overdramatic.

"God it gets me every time," Troy says, pushing Jess to the ground, causing her to groan.

"Jess! You alright?" Dustin asks, pulling her up.

She just glared at the direction Troy and his minion went.

"Fuckers." she hissed,

"Assholes." Lucas agreed.

Mike sighed, turning to Dustin.

"I think it's kinda cool. It's like you have superpowers or something," he says, causing Jess to nod her head in agreement.

"Like Mr. Fantastic."

"Yeah, except I can't fight evil with it," he says, causing Jess to roll her eyes.

"So? You're still cool to me," she says, causing Dustin to smile at her.

"Thanks, Jess."

X

The bell had rung, ending class.

"Remember, finish chapter 12 and answer 12.3 on the difference between an experiment and other forms of science investigation. This will be on the test, which will cover chapters 10 through 12. It will be multiple choice with an essay section." Mr. Clarke says, trailing off in the end when he noticed no one was listening or cared.

He turned to see the four kids standing excitedly at his desk, grinning ear to ear.

Jess was jumping up and down, her curls bouncing, grinning widely as her dimples showed, her freckle-covered nose scrunched up.

"So, did it come?" Mike asked.

Mr. Clarke sighed.

"Sorry, boys and young lady. I hate to be the bearer of bad news but..."

Jess' excitement melted away, bit by bit.

"...it came."

X

The four kids opened the door to the AV room, Jess squealing when she saw the radio.

"Yes!" Mike exclaimed.

"The Heathkit ham shack." Mr. Clarke says, smiling at Jess jumping up and down.

"Whoa." Mike sighed, smiling at it.

"Ain't she a beaut?"

"She's more than a beaut!" Jess exclaimed, grabbing the headphones and putting them on.

"I bet you can talk to New York on this thing."

"Think bigger." Mr. Clarke says.

"California?" Lucas asked.

"Bigger."

"Australia?"

Mr. Clarke nodded.

"¡¿QÚE?! ¡NO!" Jess exclaimed.

"I'm not joking."

Jess shrieked in excitement.

"Oh, man! When Will sees this, he's totally going to blow his shit." Lucas exclaimed.

"Lucas!"

"Sorry."

Dustin chuckles as they turned it on, Jess and Mike leaning into the microphone.

"Hello, this is Mike Wheeler,"

"And this is Jess Hernandez."

"Co-presidents of Hawkins Middle AV Club." they both say in terrible Australian accents.

Dustin grabs the headphones from Jess' head, putting them on.

"What are you doing?" Lucas chuckled.

"Hello, this is Dustin, and this is the secretary and treasurer of Hawkins Middle AV Club. Do you eat kangaroos for breakfast?" Dustin asks, causing Jess to howl with laughter, leaning on Lucas who had grabbed the headphones for his turn.

They heard a knock on the door, causing the four kids to turn, Jess' excitement melting away when she saw the principal and Chief Hopper there.

"Sorry to interrupt, but, uh, may I borrow Michael, Lucas, Dustin, and Jessica?"

The boys and the girl all looked at each other, frowning.

X

Jess sighed as the boys tried to talk over each other.

This is what she suffers for being the only girl in the group.

"Okay, okay, okay. One at a time all right? You, since you're not being annoying." Chief Hopper says to Jess causing her to nod.

"You said he takes what?"

"Mirkwood," she answered, biting her lip.

"Mirkwood?"

"Yeah," Mike says, causing Jess to nod.

"Have you ever heard of Mirkwood?"

"I have not. That sounds made up to me." The cop next to him says, causing Jess to roll her eyes.

"No, it's from *Lord of the Rings*," Lucas says, causing Jess and Dustin to look at him.

"Well, The Hobbit." they both argued.

"It doesn't matter."

"He asked!" Jess argued.

"He asked!" Lucas mocked, in a terrible Spanish accent.

Jess turned bright red in anger as Dustin defended her beloved natural accent.

"Shut up, guys!" Mike said, who was between the two.

"Hey, hey, hey!"

"What'd I just say? One at a damn time. You."

"Mirkwood, it's a real road. It's just the name that's made up." Mike explained.

"It's where Cornwallis and Kerley meet." Jess continued.

"Yeah, all right, I think I know that-"

"We can show you if you want." Mike offered.

"I said that I know it!"

"We can help look," Jess says, looking at the boys.

"Yeah."

"No," Hopper says, looking at all of them.

The four kids started clamoring, demanding they help.

"No. After school, you are all to go home. Immediately."

Jess sighed in anger.

"That means no biking around looking for your friend, no investigating, no nonsense. This isn't some *Lord of the Rings* book."

"The Hobbit." Dustin corrects.

"Puta," Jess says, rolling her eyes.

"Shut up!" Lucas says, hitting Dustin in the chest.

"Hey!"

"Stop it!"

Jess and Mike looked at each other and rolled their eyes at their childish demeanor.

She was just as passionate about *The Hobbit* like Dustin however, there were more important things to worry about.

Will is missing.

"Do I make myself clear?"

Chief Hopper got up, glaring at the four kids.

"Do I make myself...clear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yeah."

Jess sighs before looking at the Chief.

"Si Señor," she says, frowning.

Summary for the Chapter:

On their attempt to find Will, they find a girl with a shaved head, shivering in the cold. One look at each other and Mike and Jess come to an agreement to help this girl.

Jess was eating with Wheeler family, looking towards Mike with a worried glance.

They decided to have a sleepover since Jess' parents had gone off to a business meeting and would be back by tomorrow afternoon.

"We should be out there right now. We should be helping look for him." Mike argued, Jess nodding in agreement.

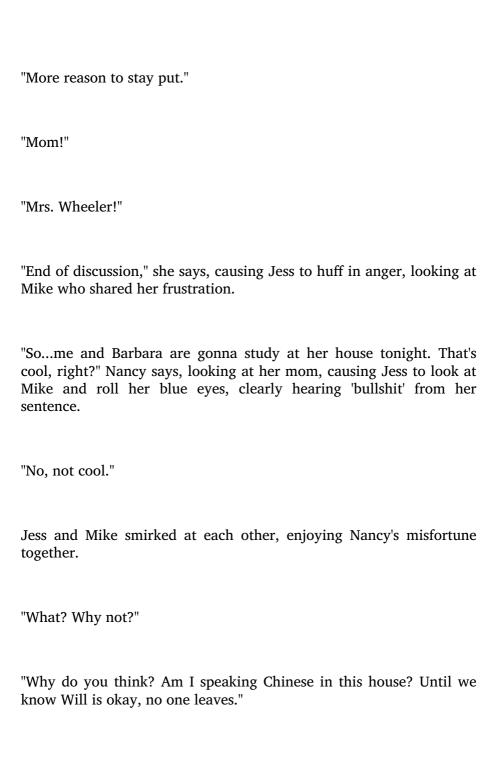
"We've been over this, Mike. The Chief says-"

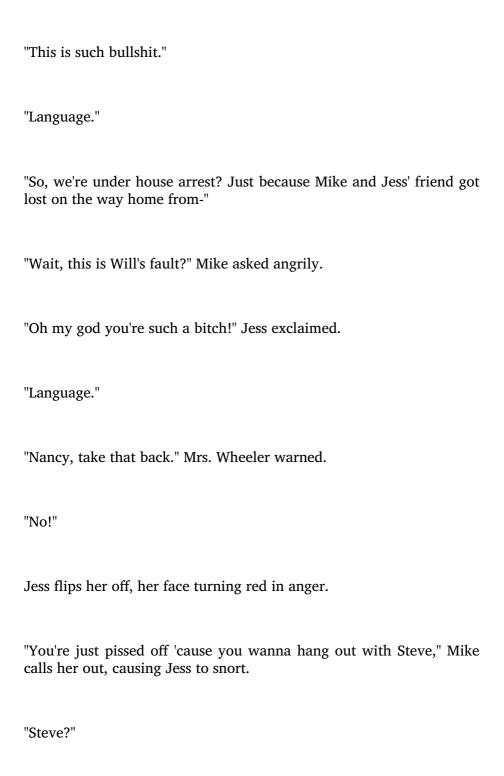
"Screw what the Chief says!" Jess argued.

"Yeah! I don't care what the Chief said." Mike says, agreeing.

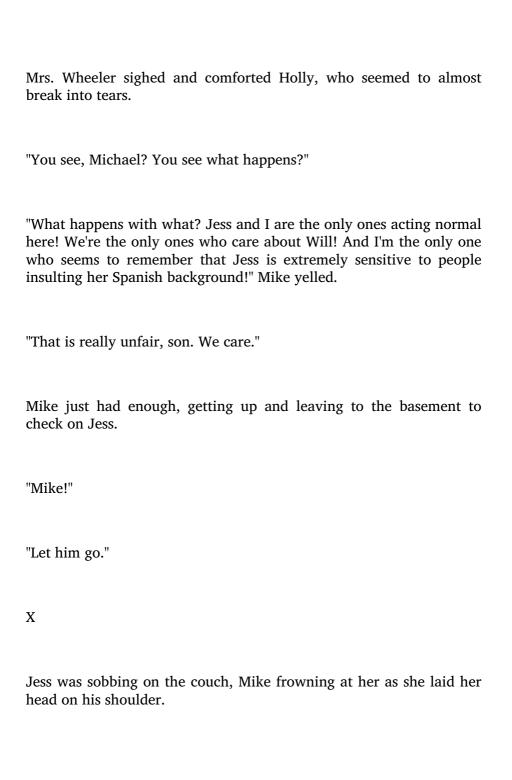
"Michael and Jessica!"

"We have to something. Will could be in danger."

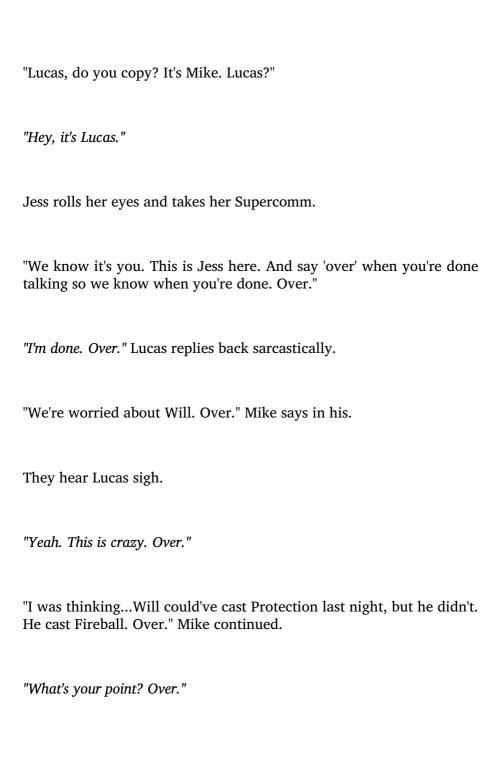


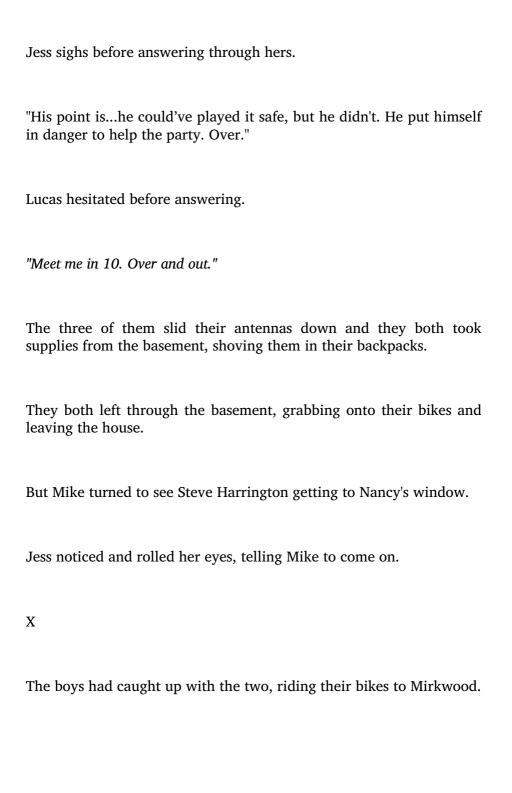


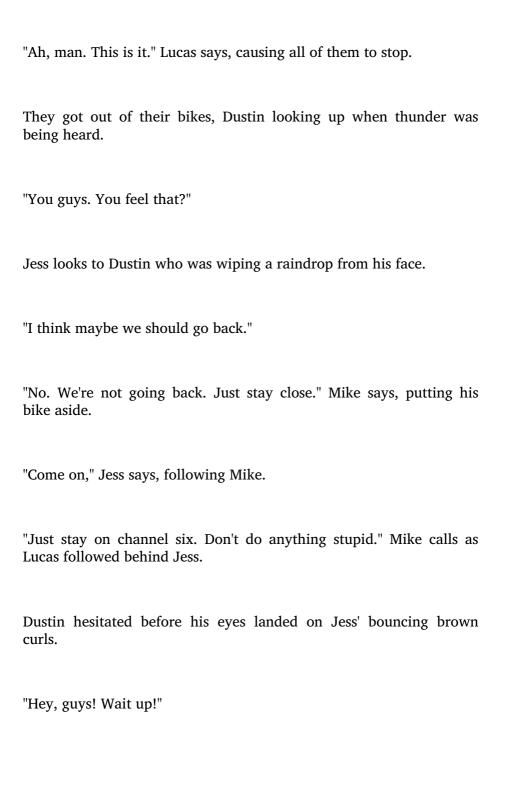


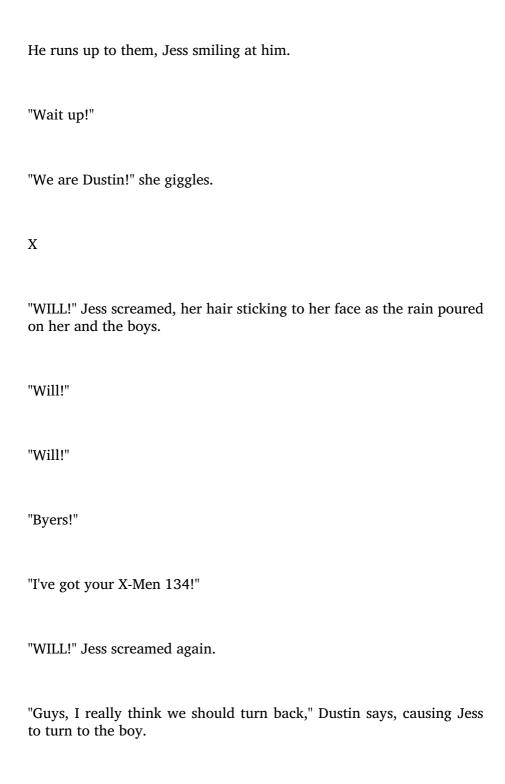


"I hate it when people call me thatshe knows that," Jess says, gasping as more tears run down her cheeks.
"I told you when she's always been a jerk, she's always been a jerk." Mike sighed.
Jess shrugged, sniffing.
"I remember a time I used to consider her my sister. Now she's just a bitch that abandons a friend once they get popular."
She chuckled, wiping her eyes.
"Thanks for listening to me rant Mike, you're like a true brother to me."
Mike smiles at Jess.
"And you're like the sister I WISHED my sister was like. A bit more understanding."
She chuckled, smiling at the freckled boy.
X

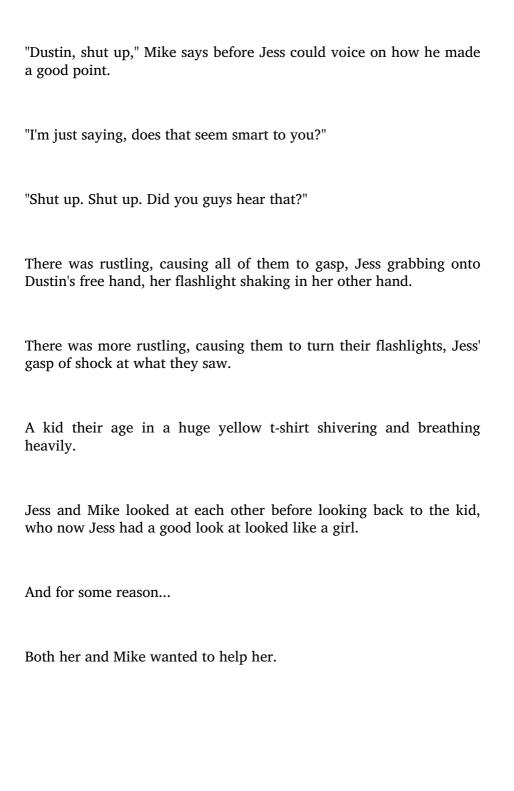












Summary for the Chapter:

The girl, now known as 'Eleven', earns two new nicknames from Mike and Jess and learns what 'Spanish' is.

They were all back at Mike's house, surrounding the girl that had on Mike's jacket and was sitting on the couch in the basement.

"Is there a number we can call for your parents?" Mike asked, looking genuinely worried.

"Where's your hair? Do you have cancer?" Dustin asked.

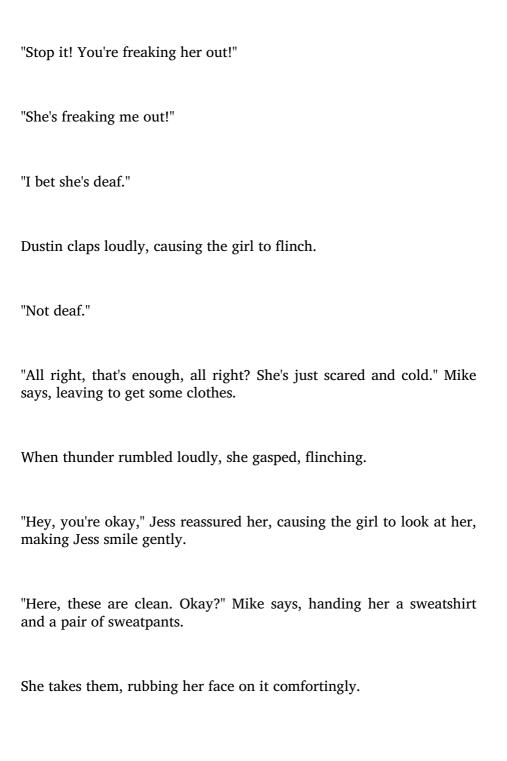
"Did you run away?" Lucas asked.

"Are you in some kind of trouble?" Jess asked calmly, looking at the girl sympathetically.

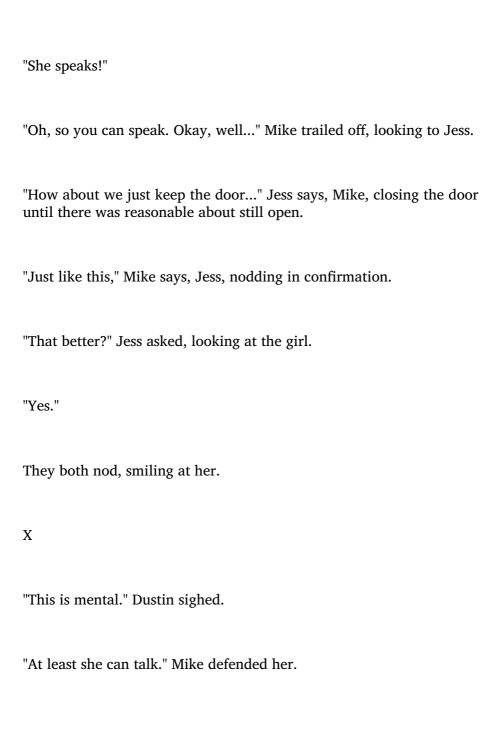
"Is that blood?"

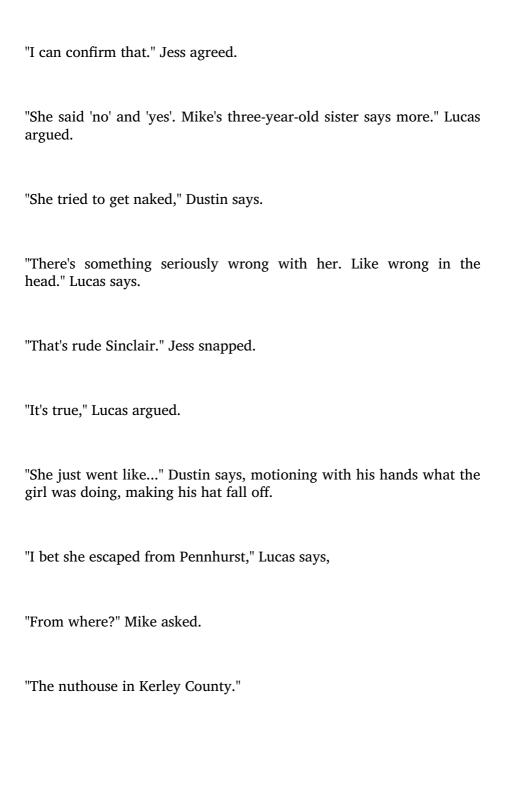
Lucas reached out to touch the red stain on her shirt.

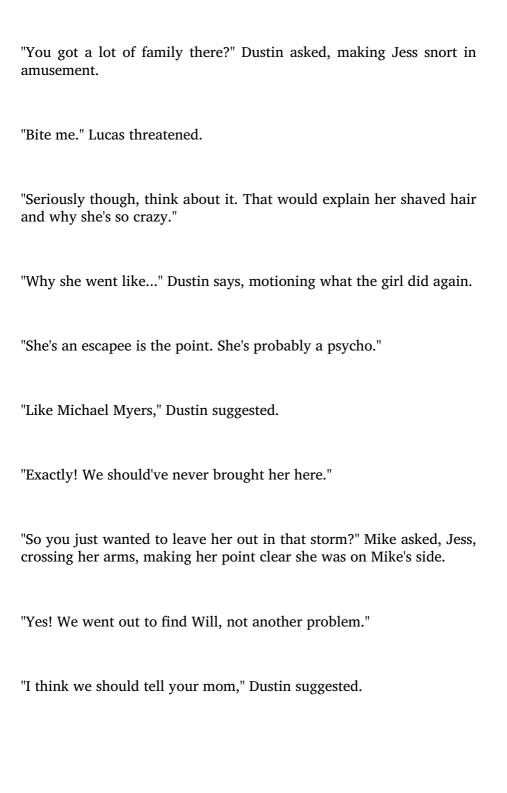
Mike hit his arm back.

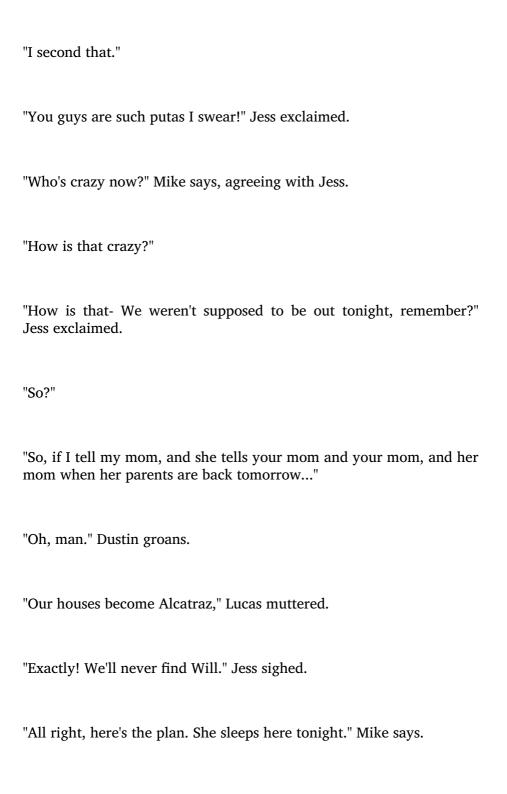












"You're letting a girl that isn't Jess-"

"Just listen! In the morning, she sneaks around my house and goes to the front door and rings my doorbell. My mom will answer and know exactly what to do. She'll send her back to Pennhurst or wherever she comes from. We'll be totally in the clear. And tomorrow night, we go back out. And this time, we find Will." Mike says, causing Jess to nod.

"Now, I second this." She says, glaring at the boys to dare say otherwise.

X

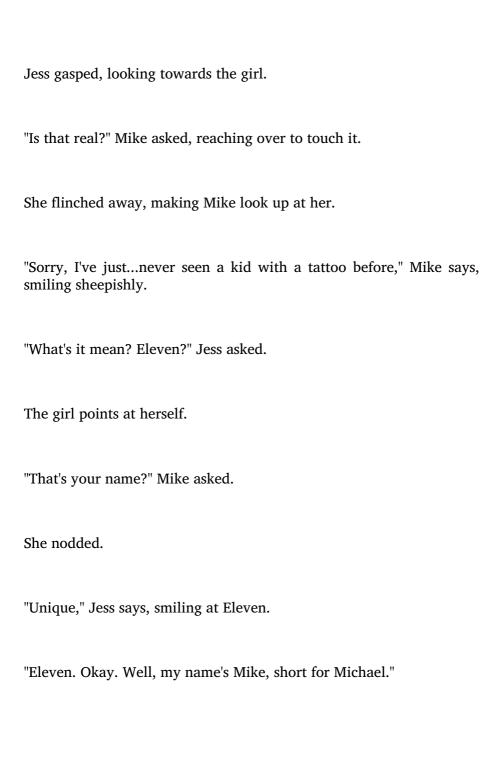
Jess and Mike were handing the girl blankets and pillows for her to sleep on as well as Mike's sleeping bag in a fort they made for her.

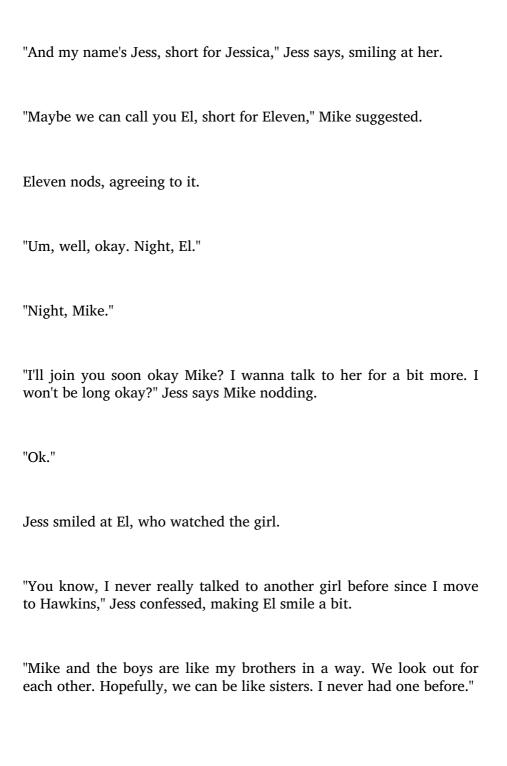
Dustin watched as Jess had a huge smile as the girl took the blankets from her, smiling at her as well.

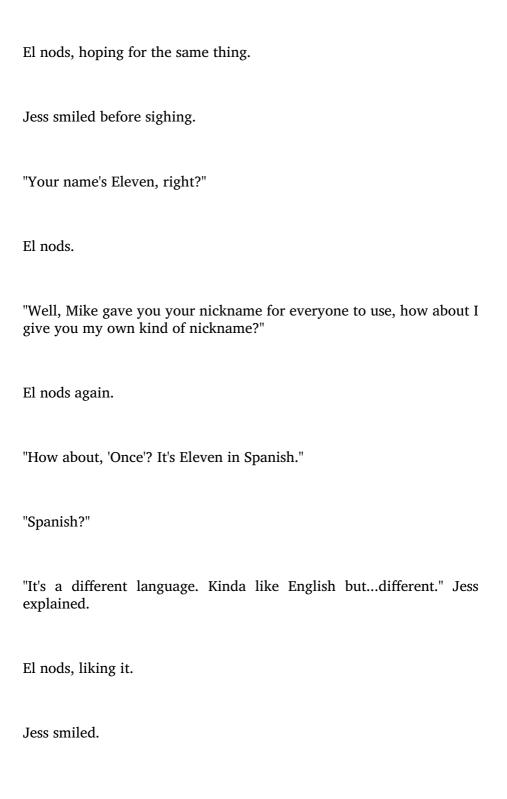
"Mental." He says before following Lucas.

"Hey, um, we never asked your name," Mike says, Jess nodding.

The girl looked at Jess and Mike before revealing her arm, that had 011 on it.







"Ok then. Buenas Noches Once."
El hesitated before replying.
"Buenas Noches Jess."
Jess smiled before drawing the blanket to close the fort.

5. Chapter 5

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess feels a need to look after Eleven after it's revealed that bad people are after her, and Mike feels the same.

"Make sure you get some for El alright?" Jess whispered to Mike as they waited for the Eggos to pop up.

Mike nodded.

"I know."

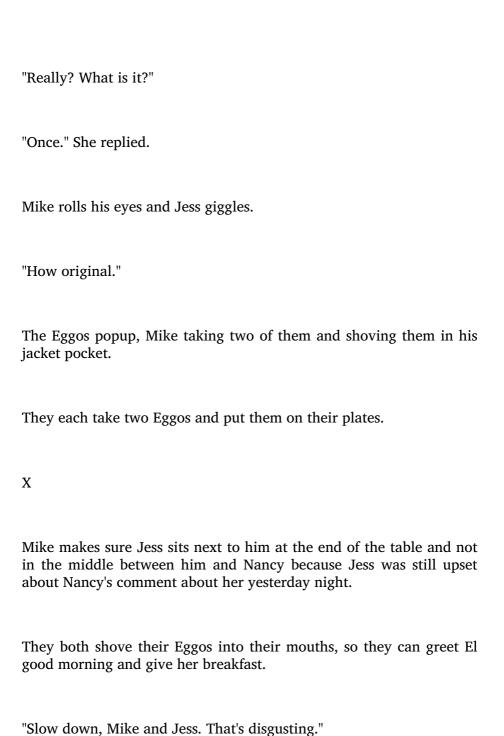
Jess smiled, looking at the basement.

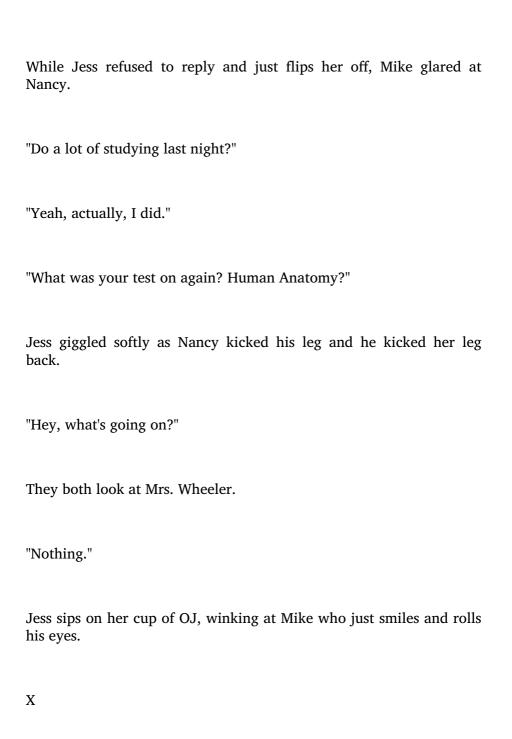
"What did you two talk about?"

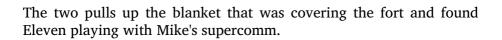
"Nothing much, really. It's a shame she has to leave. I would like to have another girl in the party." Jess mumbled, causing Mike to smile sadly at her.

"I know. If the circumstances weren't dire, I would have welcomed her to the party once we got to know her a bit more." Mike agreed.

"I have my own nickname for her too, though, only I can call her it," Jess says, smirking at Mike.







"Hey, you found my supercomm. Pretty cool huh?" Mike says, smiling at her.

She looks up to see Jess and looks back down at the supercomm.

"I talk to my friends with it. Mostly Lucas and Jess 'cause they live so close. Signal's pretty weak."

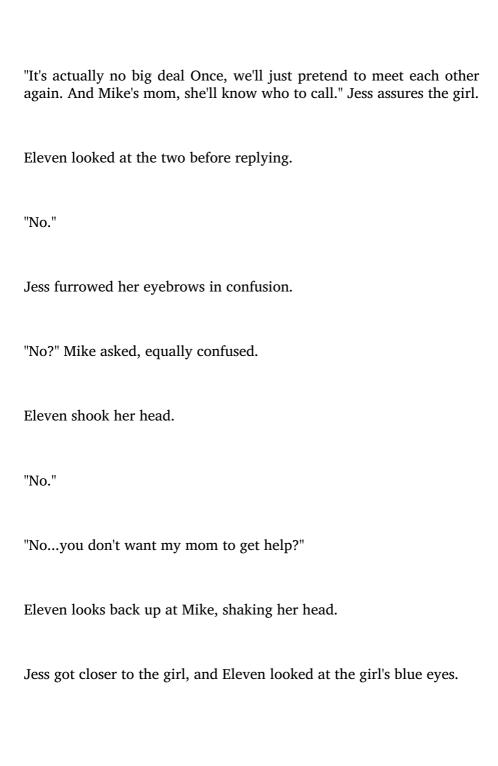
"Yeah, it really is." Jess chuckled.

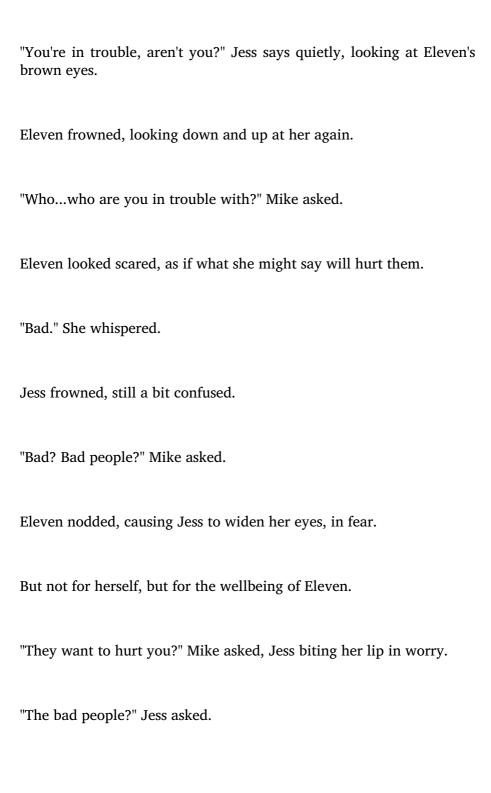
Eleven looked at Mike who gets the Eggos and hands them to her.

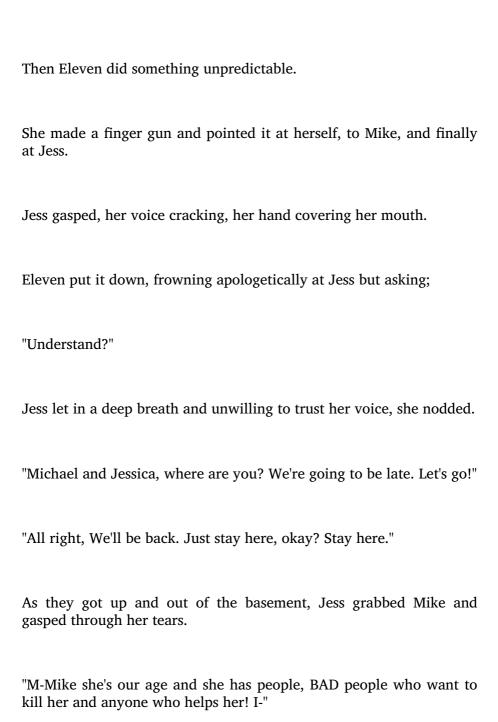
"Got you breakfast." He says, Jess smiling as El took a bite out of the waffle.

"So listen, this is gonna sound a little weird, but I just need you to go out there. Then go to the front door and ring the doorbell. My mom will answer and you'll tell her that you're lost and that you need help. But whatever you do, you can't tell her about last night or that you know us. Understand?"

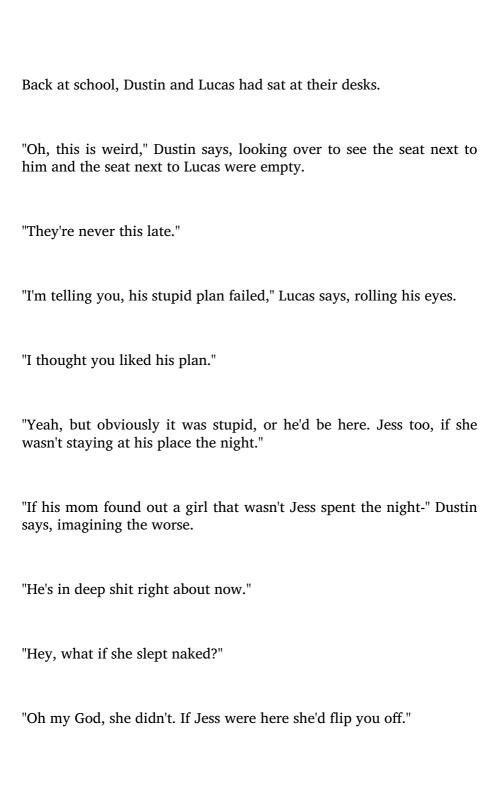
Jess looked at Eleven, biting her lip.

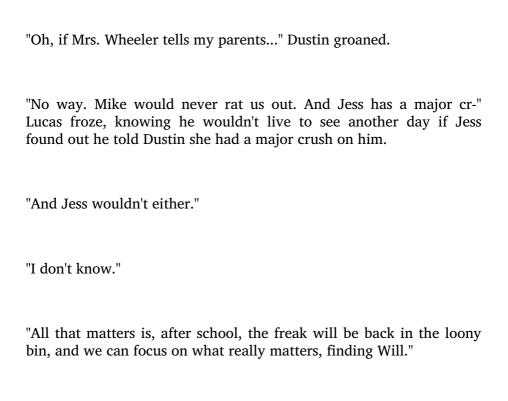






"I know Jess, I know. It shocks me as well. But, are you still in on helping her?"
She gave him an 'are you fucking serious?' look.
"This just gave me more reason to protect her! We're skipping today." Jess says, Mike nodding.
"I agree."
Jess sighed.
"I wish we could tell the boys but, Lucas doesn't seem to trust her. I get where he's coming from, but there's no reason to act so mean."
Mike nods as they walk outside, getting on their bikes.
"Let's go so we can trick my parents that we're going to school."
Jess nods, both of them riding their bikes in silence.
X





Dustin sighs, looking back at the empty seat next to him that would

normally be seated by Jess.

6. Chapter 6

Summary for the Chapter:

Mike, Jess, and Eleven become a trio of best friends in the span of a couple hours.

Mrs. Wheeler's car drove past, Mike and Jess waiting till it was clear before they rode back to Mike's house.

"Ok, let's head back," Jess says, riding down the hill, Mike following behind her.

X

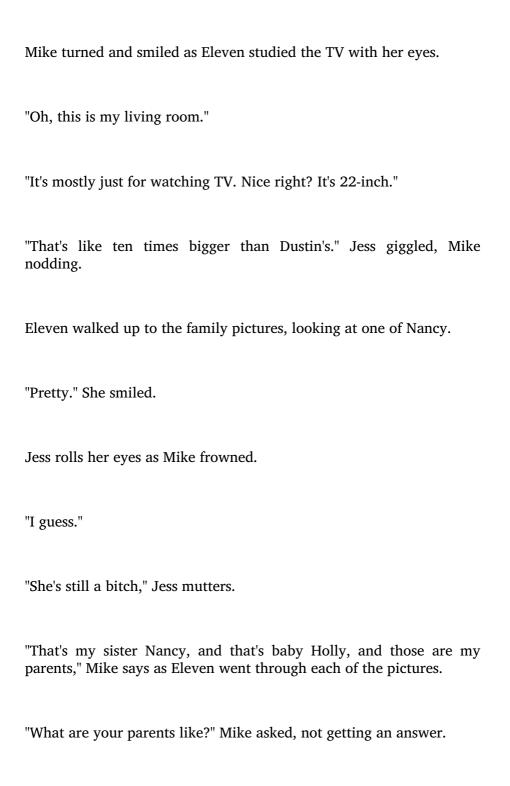
"You want anything to drink?" Mike asked Eleven who was following the pair around the house.

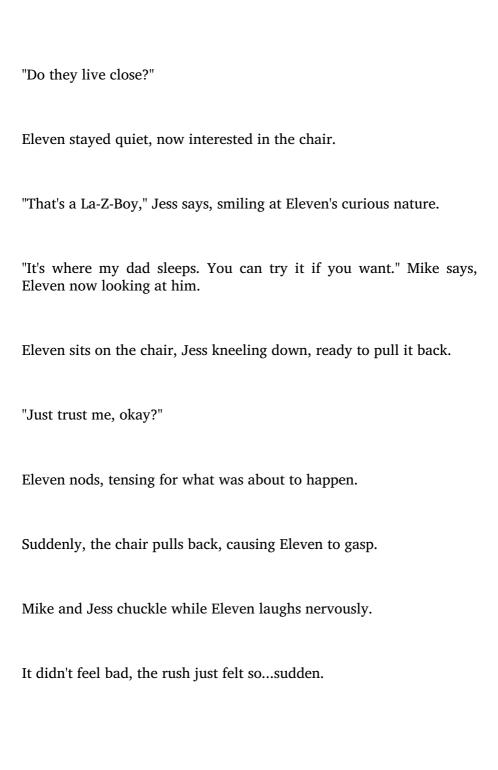
"We have OJ, skim milk....what else?"

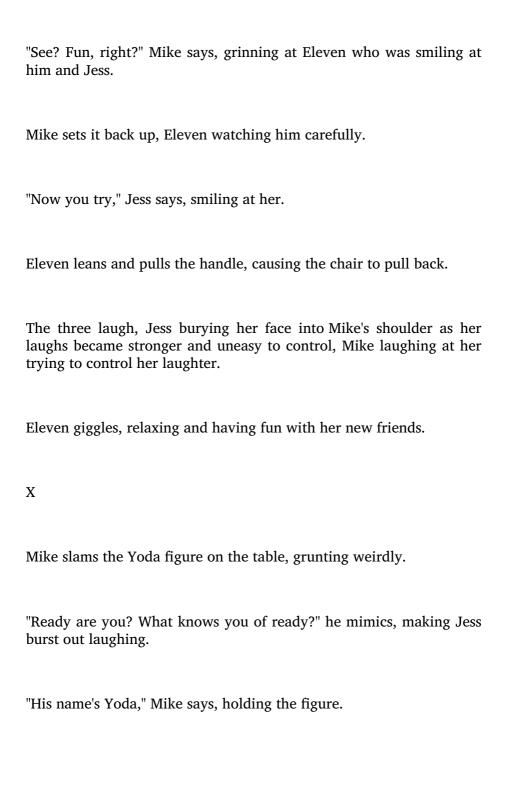
"Water?" Jess teased, causing a smile to appear on Eleven's lips as Mike rolls his eyes.

She headed into the living room, looking at the TV.

"Um, we have..."







"He can use the Force to move things with his mind, like this," Jess says, pushing the toys off the board.
Eleven looked uninterested about the information and looked over to see Mike's trophies.
"Oh, this is my dinosaur, Rory. Look he has a speaker in his mouth so he can roar."
The dinosaur roared, making Jess roll her eyes, looking to see Eleven had stood up, walking over to where Mike's trophies were.
They both got up, walking over to Eleven who was looking at all the trophies.

"Oh, these are all my science fair trophies," Mike says, Jess smiling at

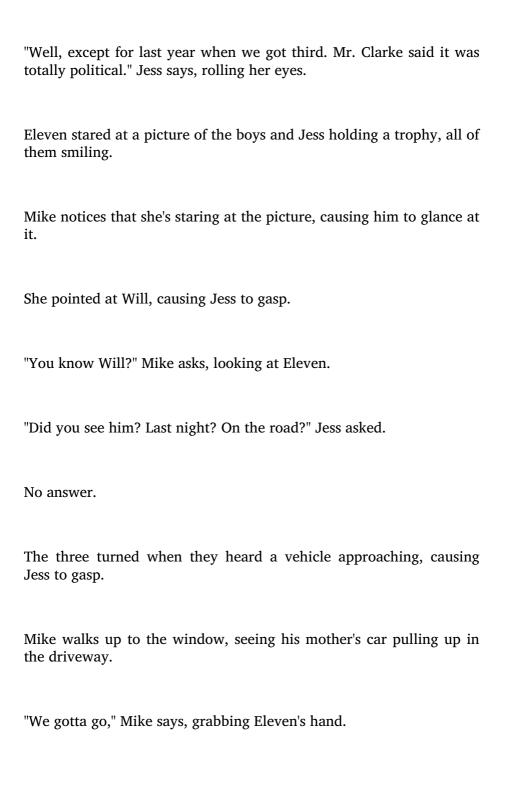
"Some of them were won when I moved here a few years ago. 5 years, to be exact." Jess says, recognizing a trophy that was on Mike's

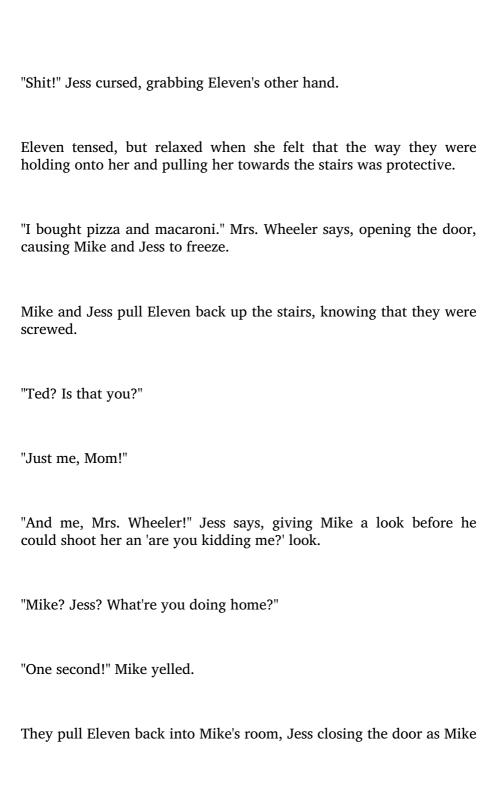
stand from her first science fair with the boys.

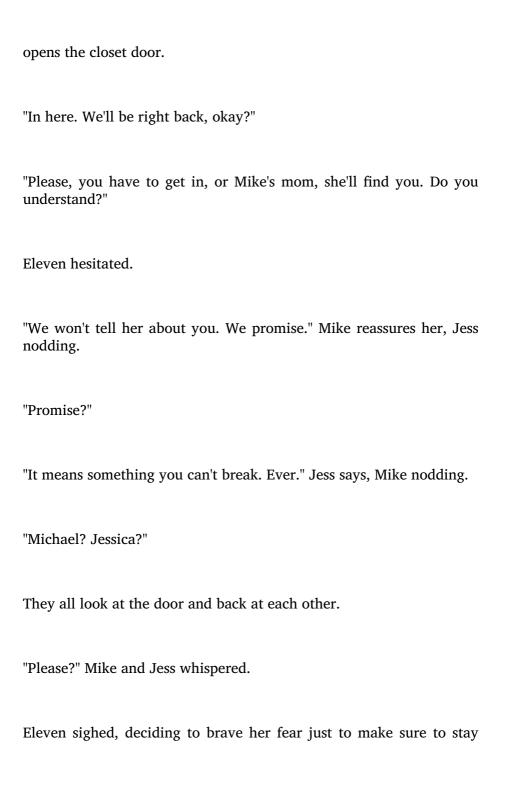
"Yeah, we got first every year."

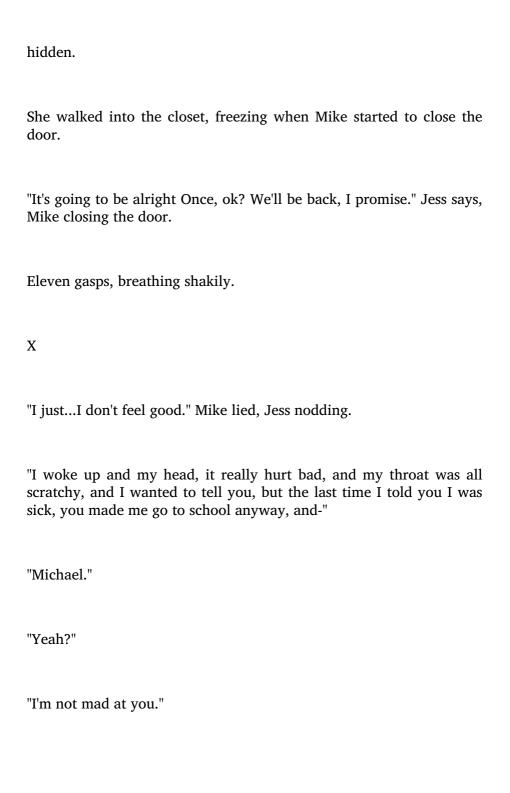
She had a few trophies of her own back at her place.

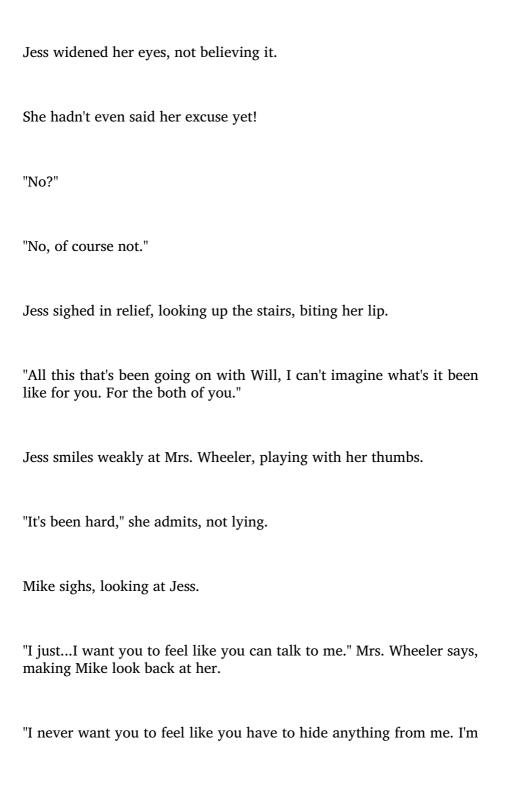
each of them.

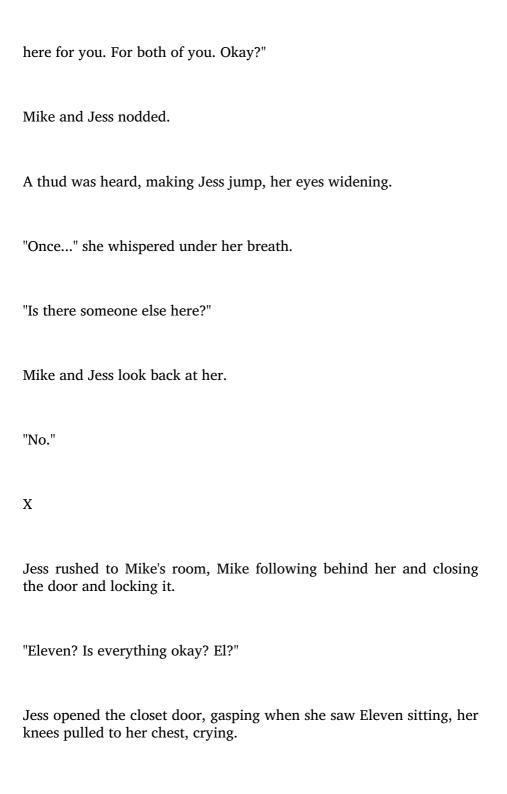


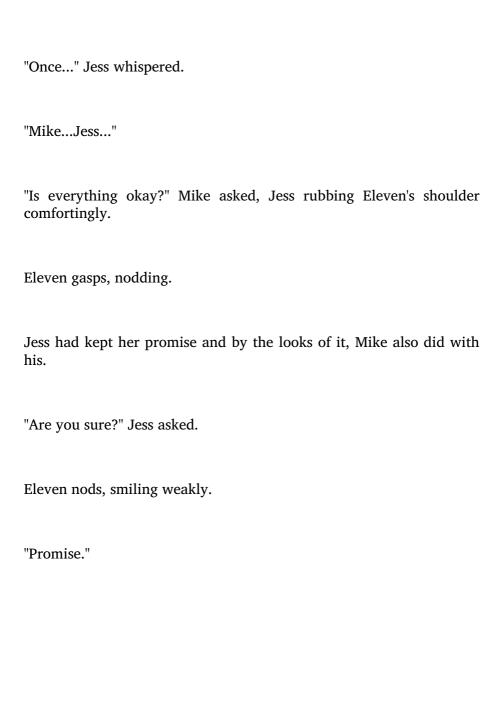












7. Chapter 7

Summary for the Chapter:

Eleven reveals she has telekinetic powers, to Jess and the boys surprise and learn what 'friend' means.

Lucas and Dustin stared at Eleven who had been laughing at whatever Jess was saying (a joke about Mike) who now looked at them, frowning suddenly.

Jess looks up when she heard the door close and widens her eyes at the sight of the two boys.

She gets up, smiling at Eleven before returning to her glare, crossing her arms, ready to defend her new best friend.

"Are you two out of your minds?"

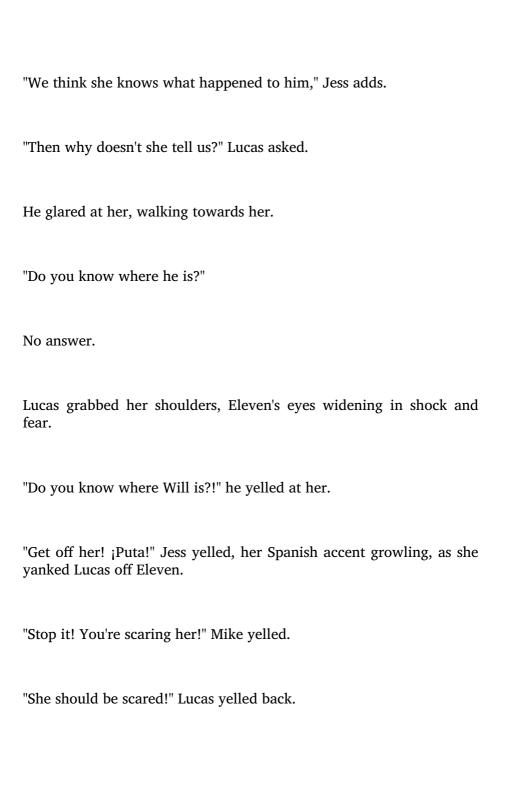
"Just listen to us," Mike says.

"That's not a question," Jess added.

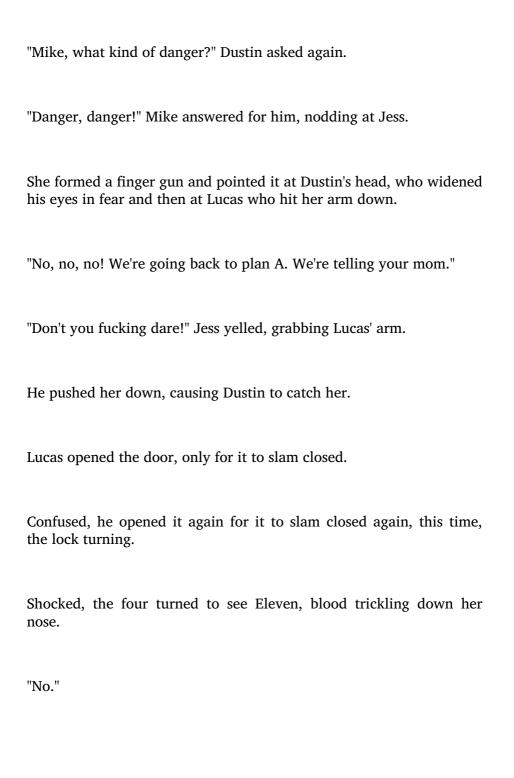
"You two are out of your minds!"

"She knows about Will," Jess says.









Jess played with her meatloaf, what Mrs. Wheeler said a few hours earlier when she called her still ringing in her head.

"Your parents called to let us know that the meeting is taking longer than expected and they won't be back until the end of the week. You better ride back to your place so you can get extra clothes since you're staying with us until they come back, alright? They're really sorry Jessica."

She sighed, putting down her fork.

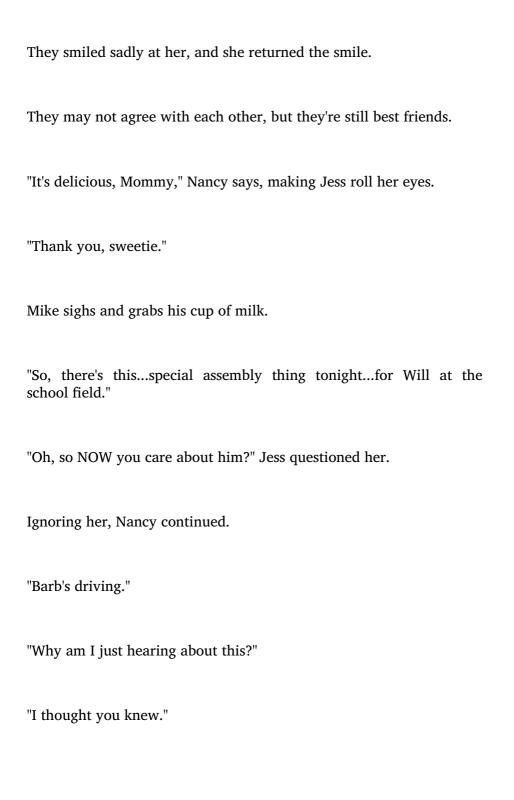
"Something wrong with the meatloaf?"

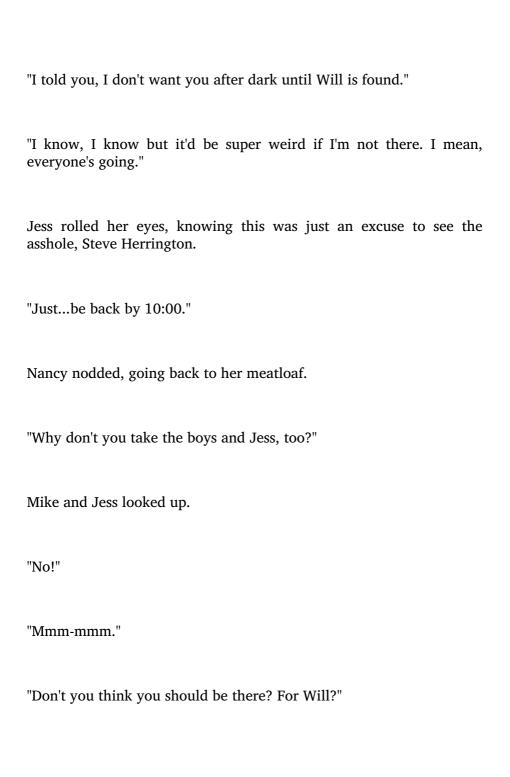
Mike looked at Jess empathetically, as did Dustin and Lucas, when she didn't want to answer her question.

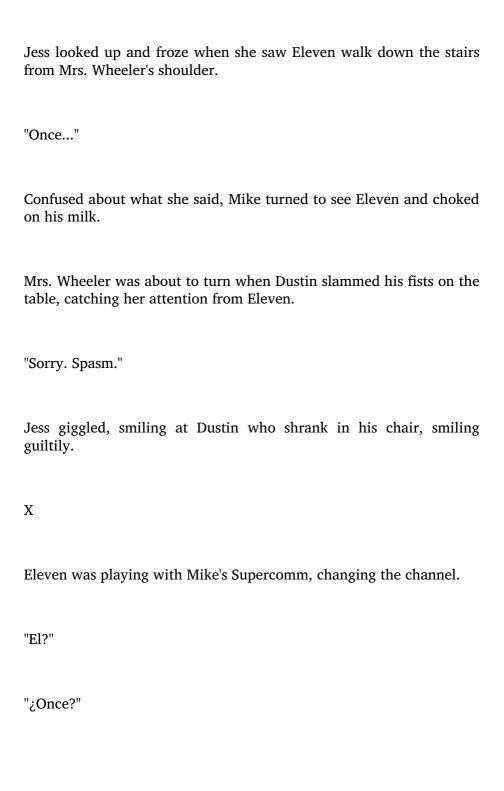
"Oh, no, I had two bologna sandwiches for lunch. I don't know why." Dustin suddenly said, causing Jess to look up at him.

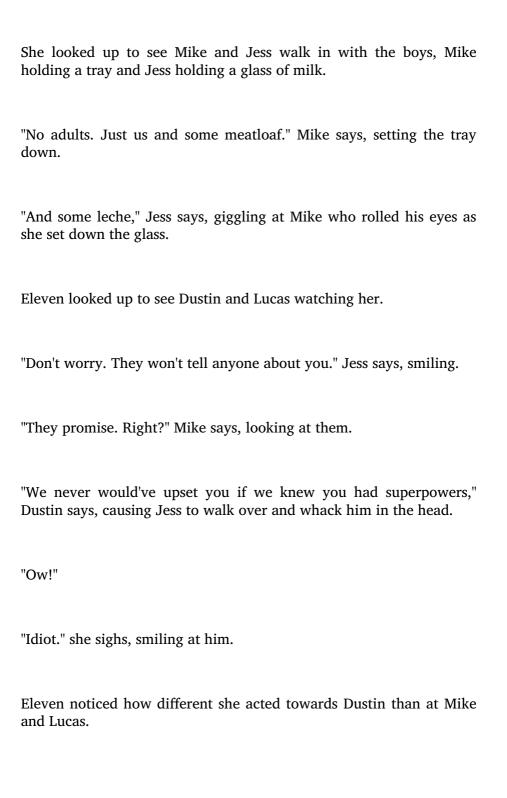
Lucas chuckled.

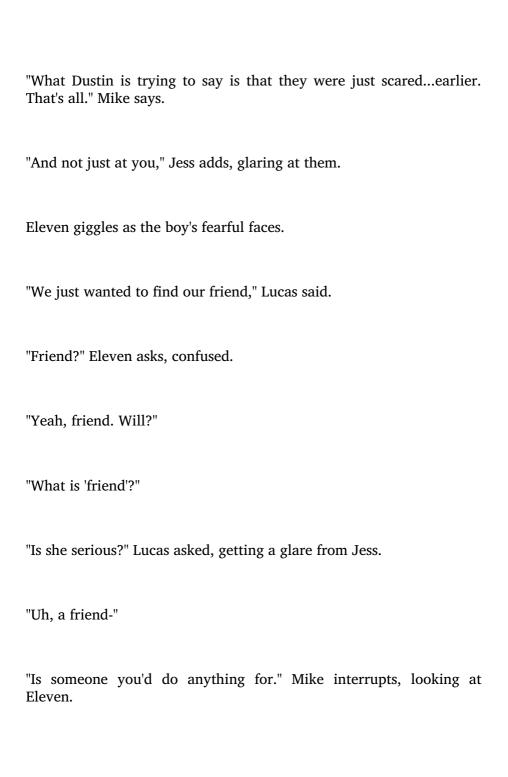
"Me, too."

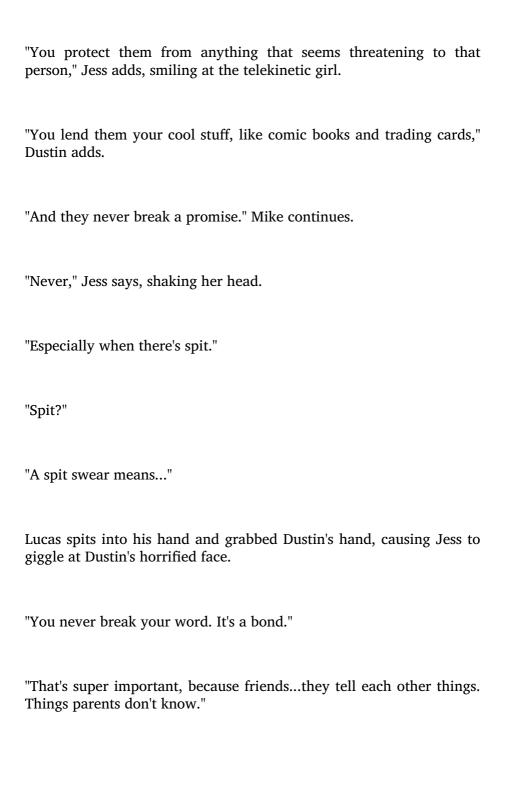












Eleven looked down.

"Another thing about friends is that no matter if we get into fights or arguments, we always make things right. Because, friends are also like siblings." Jess says, making Lucas, Dustin and Mike smile and nod, agreeing.

Eleven watched the four, witnessing the strong bond they all had with each other.

She smiled, wanting the same thing.

8. Chapter 8

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess gets a bad dream and goes to the basement to sleep with Eleven, who gives her a nickname only she could use.

The boys were talking about something that Jess didn't really care to listen in to and just watched Eleven walk up to the board where they played Dungeons and Dragons.

She sat where Mike usually sits when they were playing, making her become confused, walking up to her.

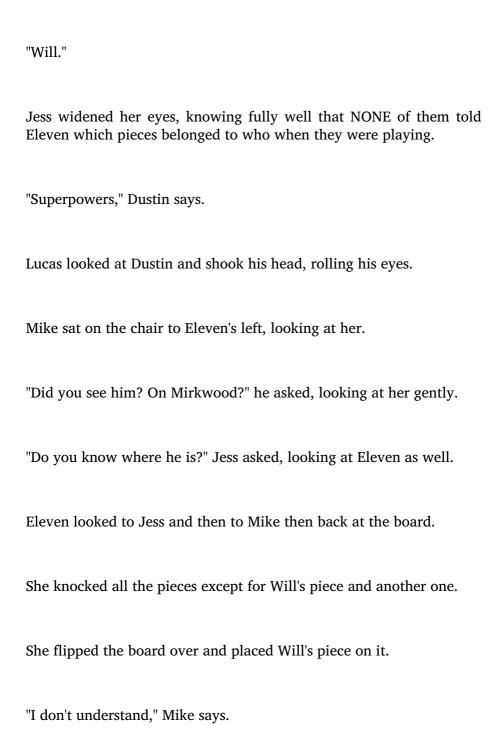
"What's the weirdo doing?" Lucas asked, earning a glare and the finger from Jess as she sat on the chair to Eleven's right.

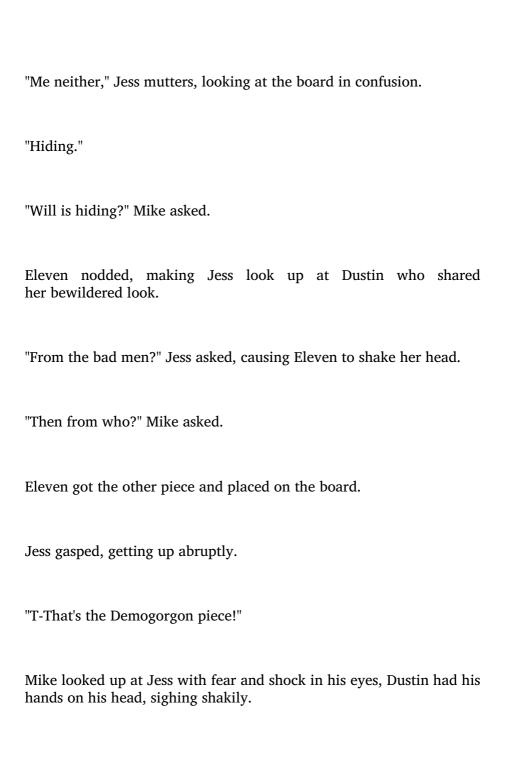
Eleven closed her eyes, making Jess furrow her eyebrows, looking at Dustin in confusion and he gave her the same look.

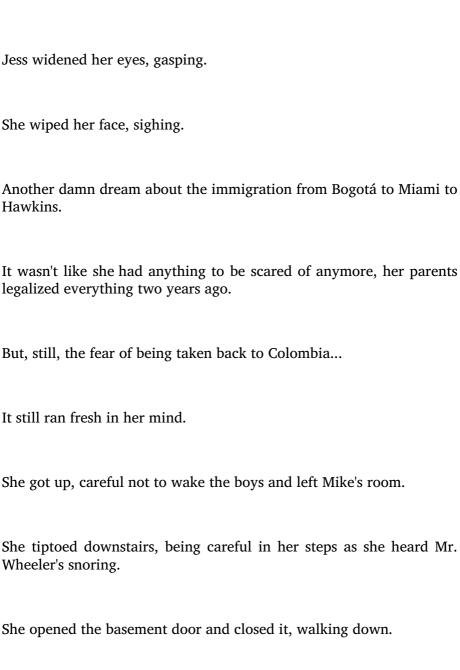
What was Eleven doing?

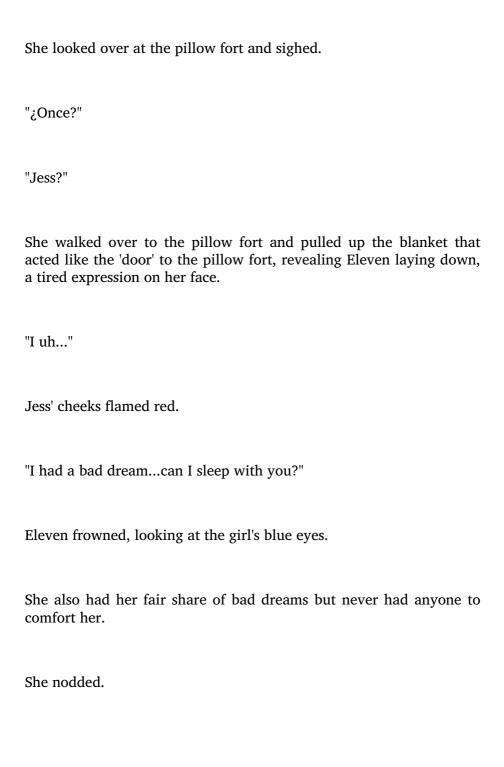
"El?" Mike asked, Jess looking up to see Mike looking at Eleven carefully.

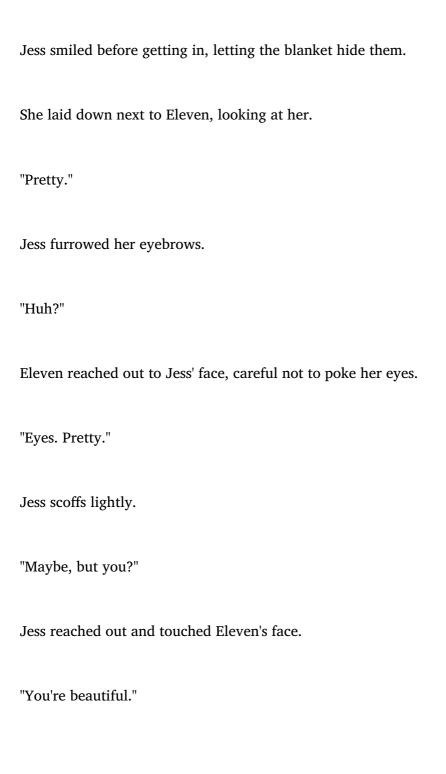
Eleven opened her eyes and took the figure that Will used for DnD.

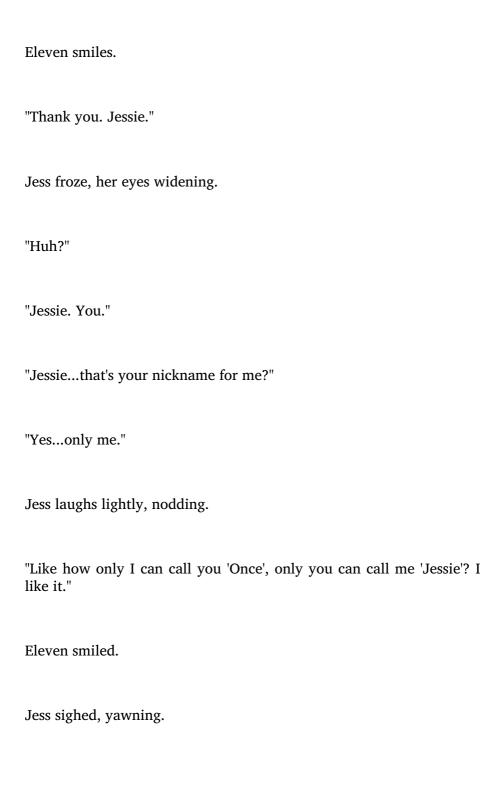


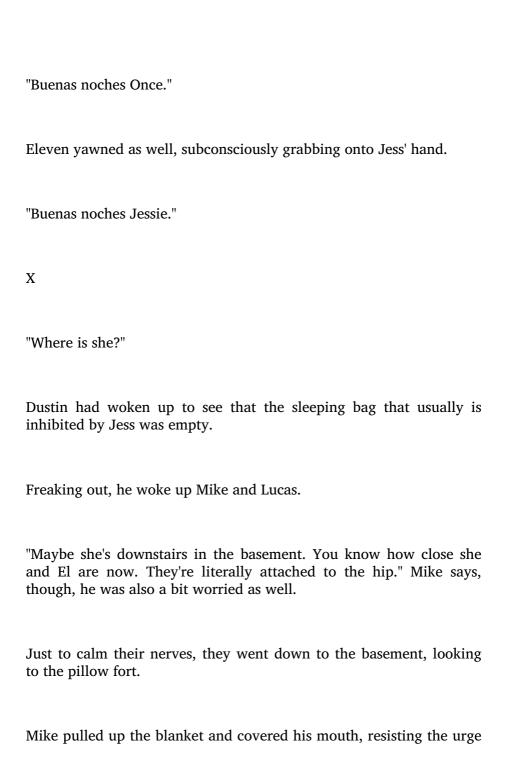


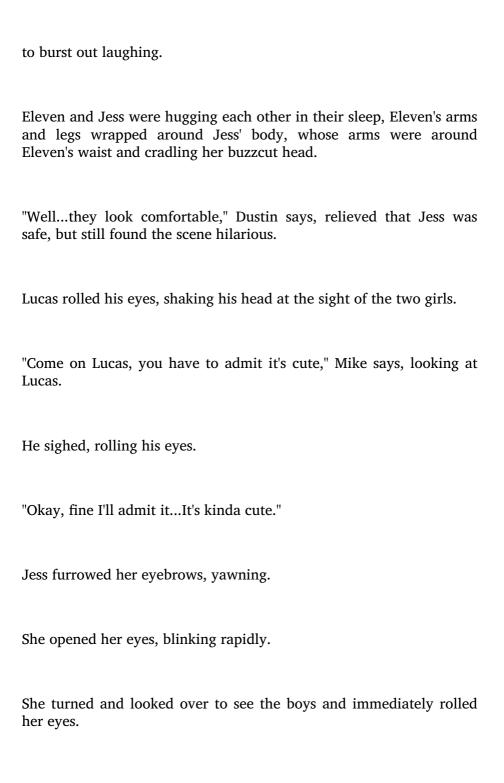


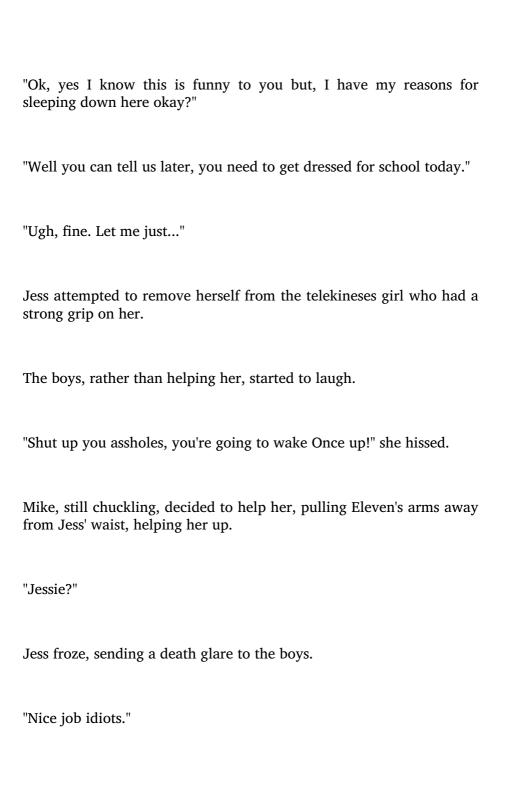


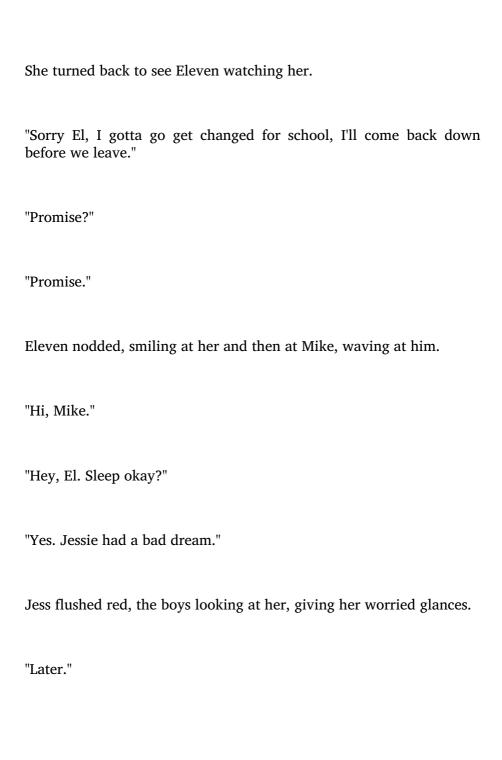


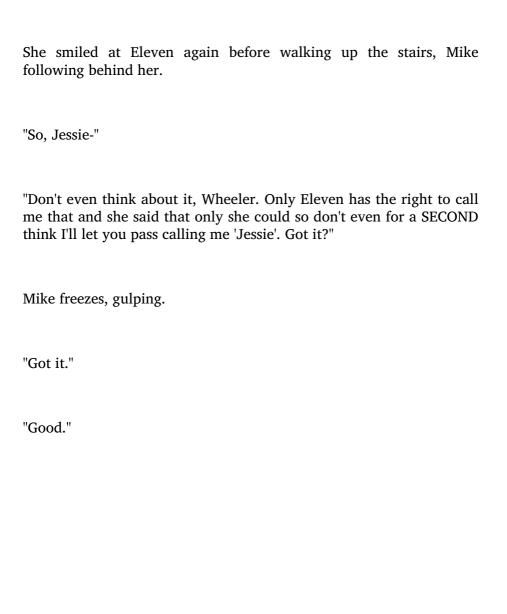












9. Chapter 9

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess shows the boys her rifle and at school, she and Mike get hurt by Troy and his 'minion'.

Eleven was playing with Mike's Supercomm again while Mike, Lucas, Dustin, and Jess talked about how they were going to get Operation Mirkwood going.

"We just tell our parents we have AV Club after school. That'll give us at least a few hours for Operation Mirkwood."

"You seriously think that the weirdo knows where Will is?" Lucas asked, earning a smack in the head from Jess.

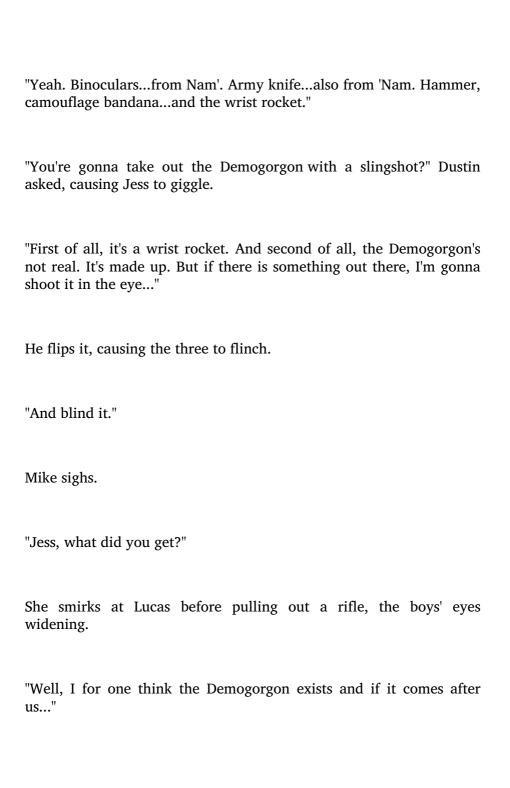
"Ow!"

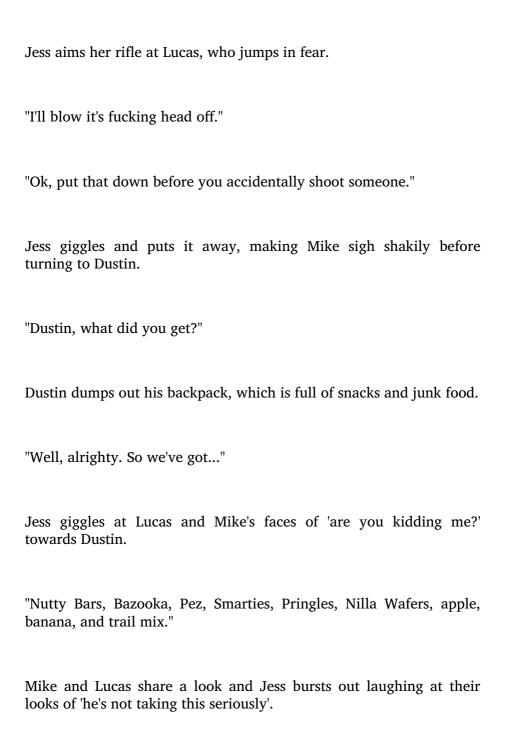
"Don't call her a 'weirdo'," she growled.

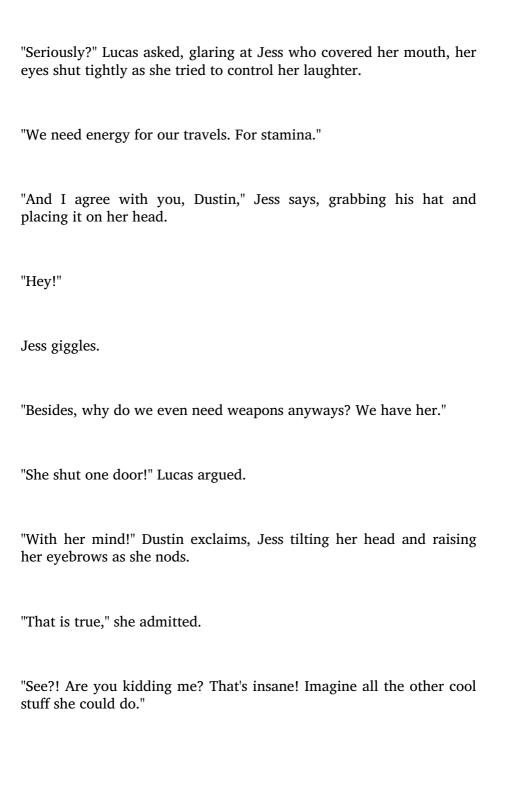
"Just trust me on this, okay?" Mike says, giving Jess a grateful look for hitting Lucas for the 'weirdo' comment.

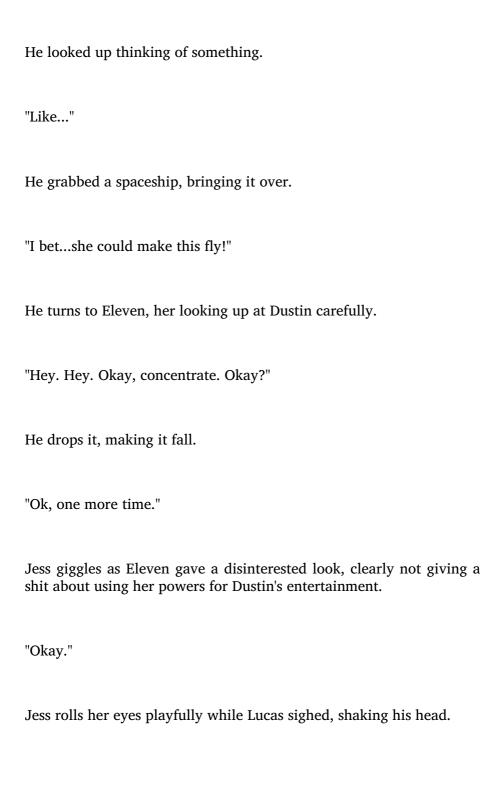
"Okay."

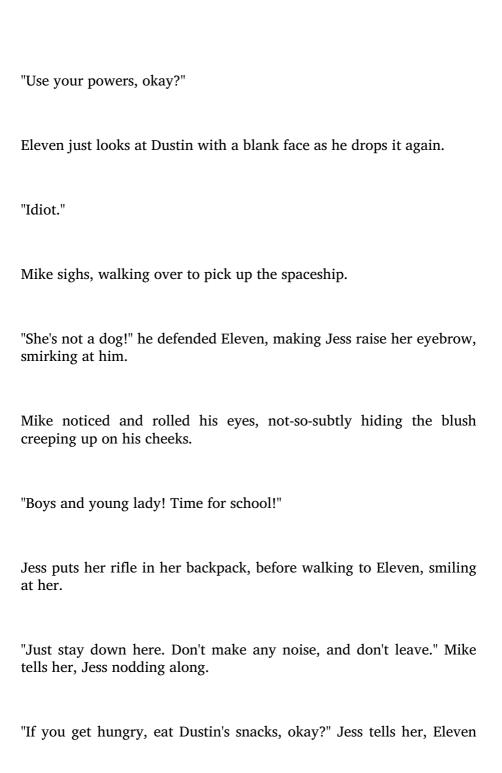
"Did you get the supplies?"

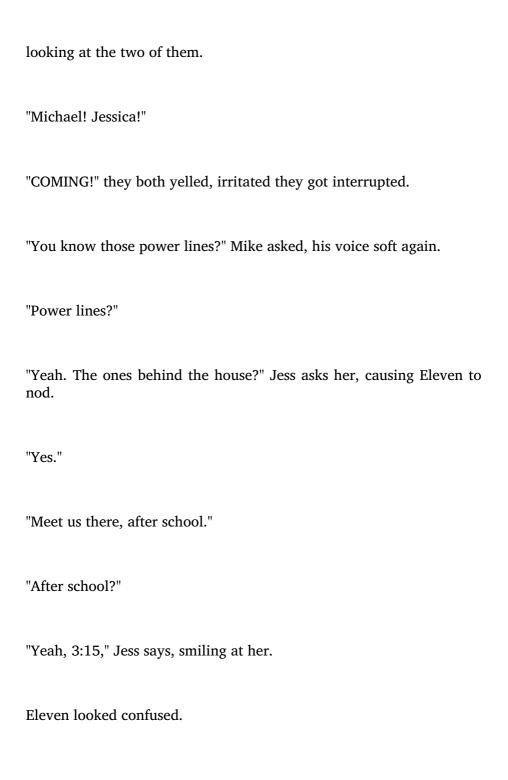


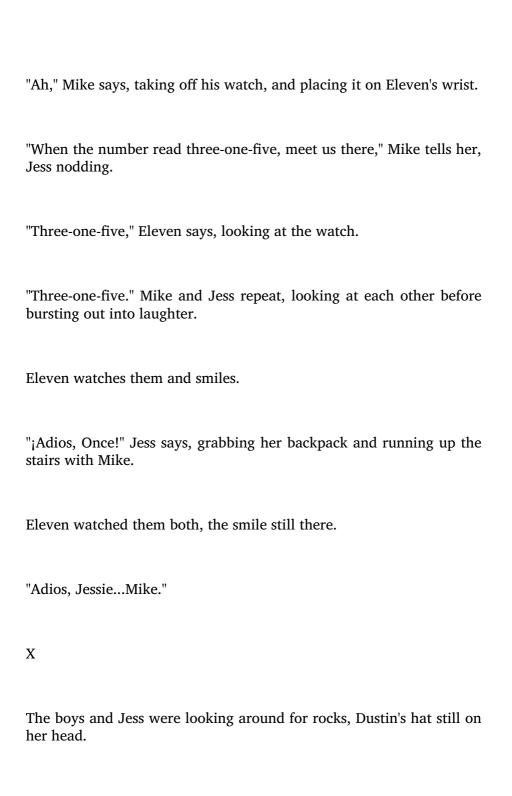


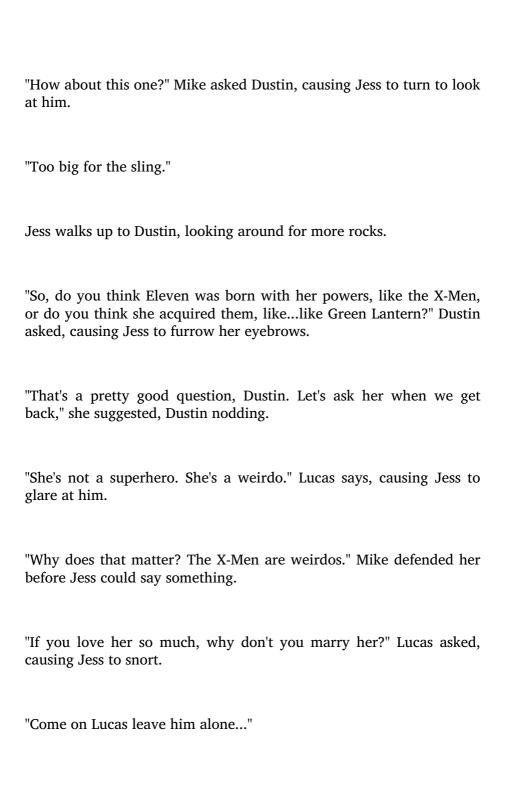


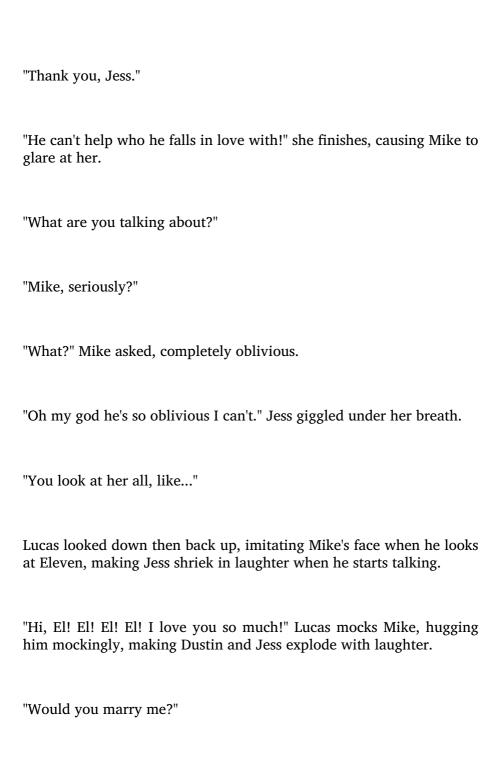


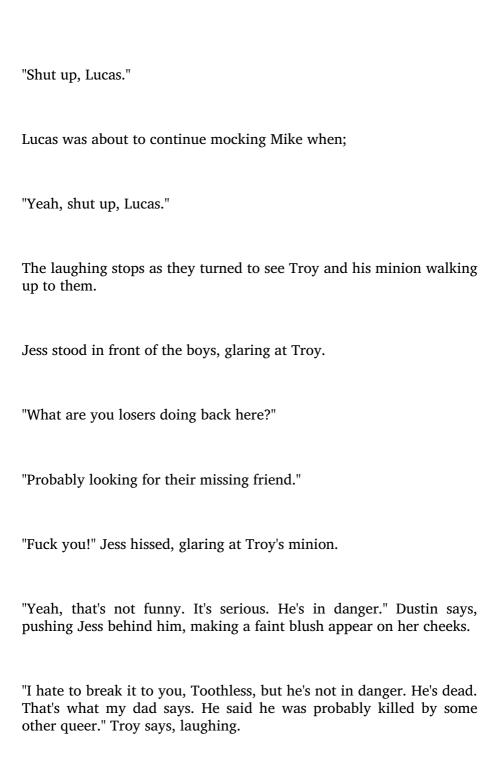


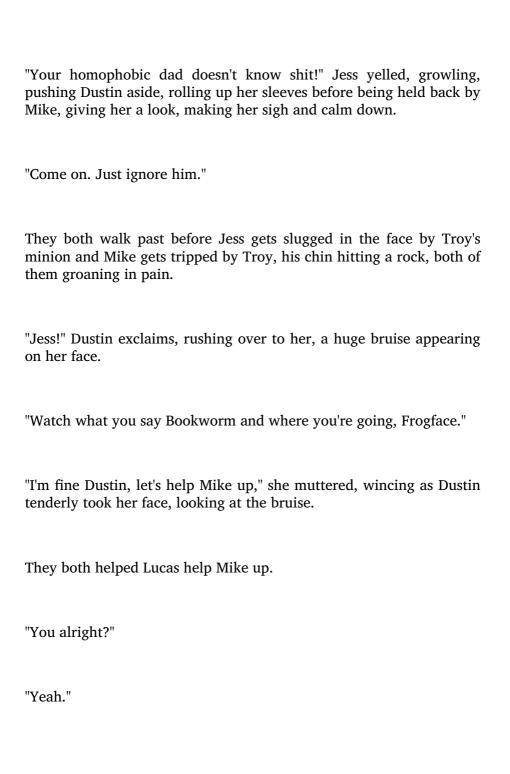


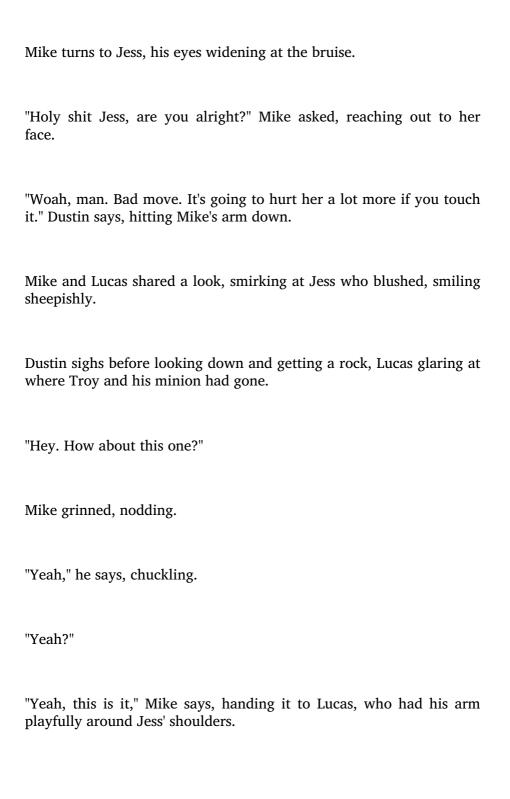


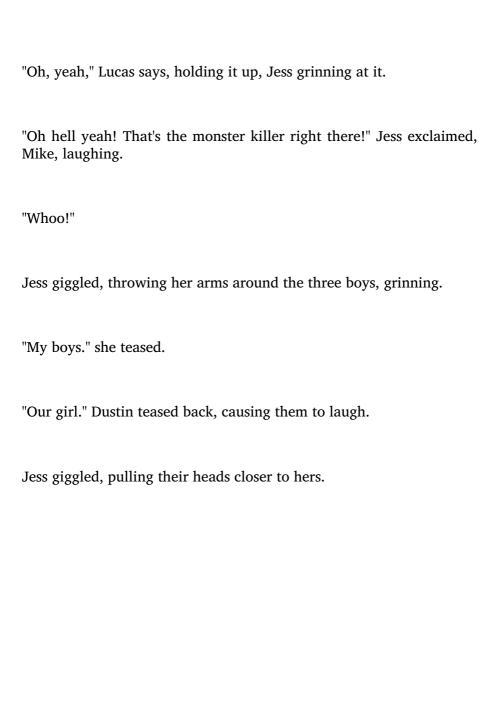












10. Chapter 10

Summary for the Chapter:

Eleven leads them back to Will's house, only for them to realize a few minutes later he's dead and Eleven lied...but did she?

Eleven walked up the hill, towards the power lines Mike and Jess had talked about, her hands shaking a bit.

She looked around, anxious that she might be seen and looked down at Mike's watch.

"Three-one-five. Three-one-five."

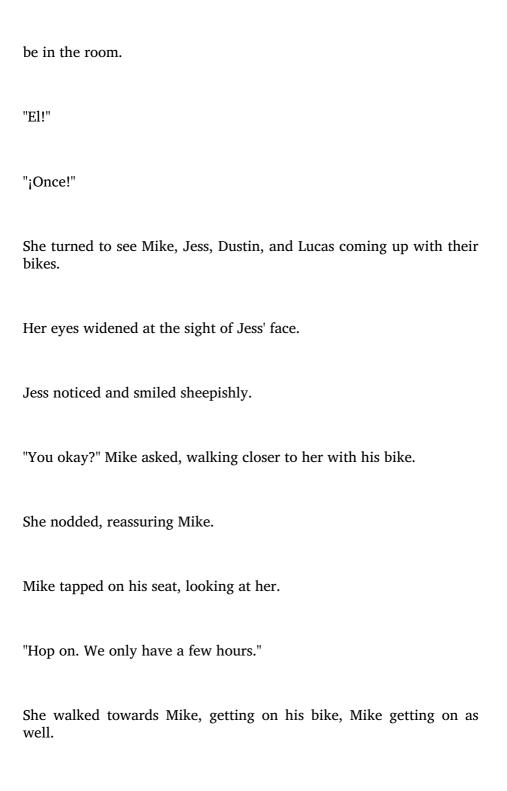
She paced around, looking at the watch when she heard a meow.

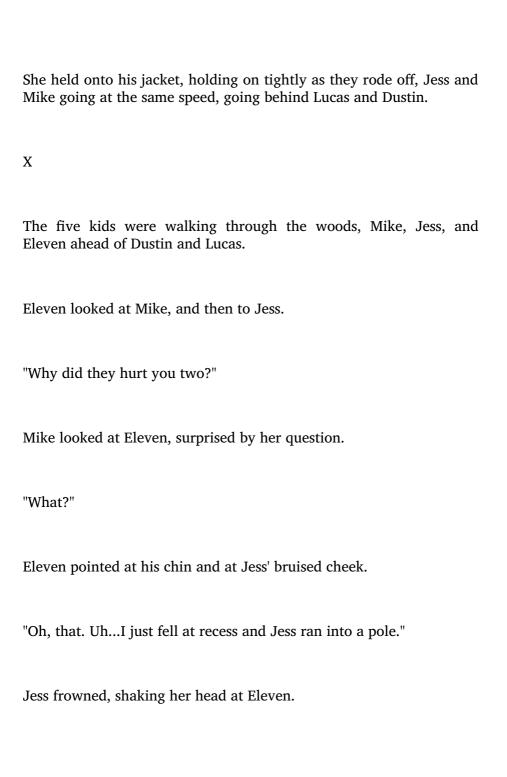
She looked to see a cat, her eyes widening, breathing heavily.

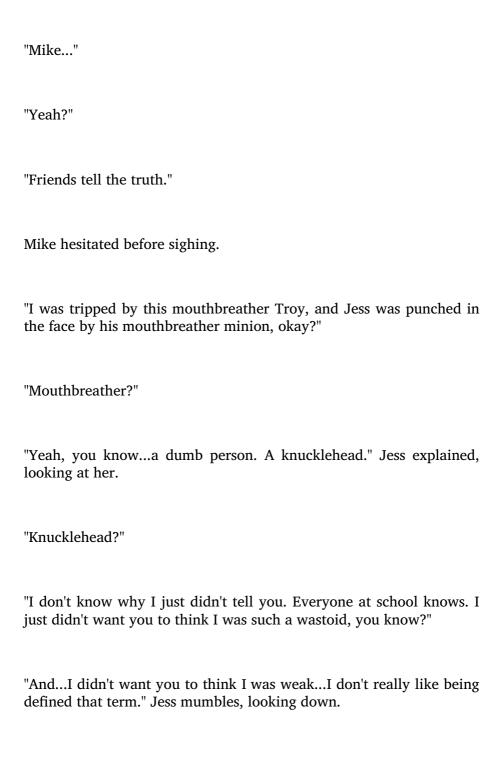
She furrowed her eyebrows, her lips trembling as her mind flashed back to when she had failed to complete an experiment where she had to hurt a cat.

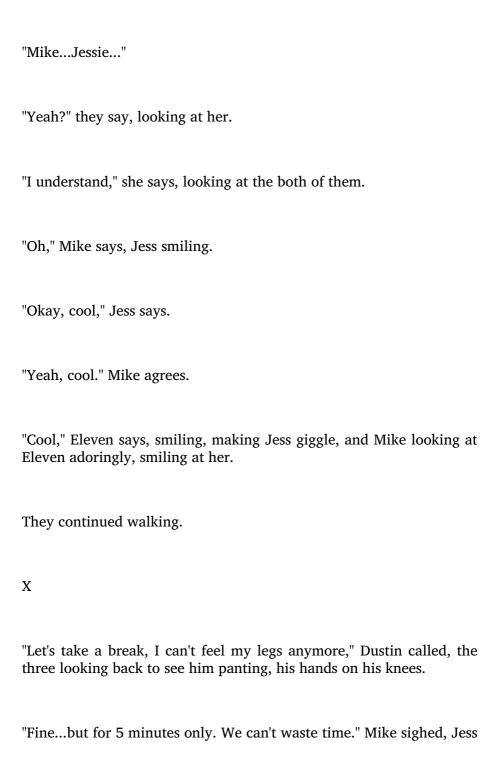
She was supposed to be punished for it, but she killed one of the bad men that was locking her in that room that she absolutely hated.

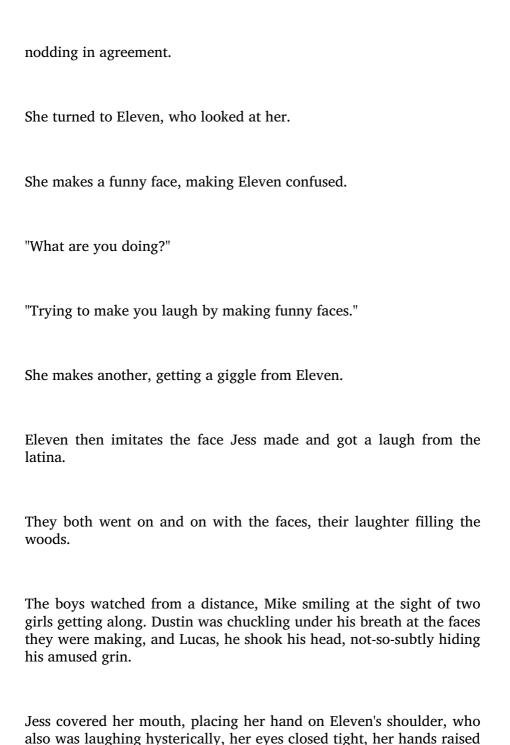
Apparently what she did pleased her 'Papa' and she wasn't forced to

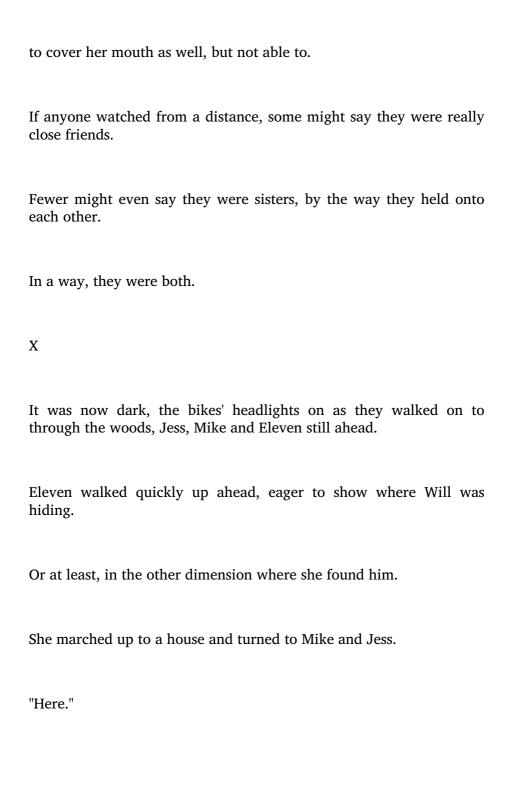


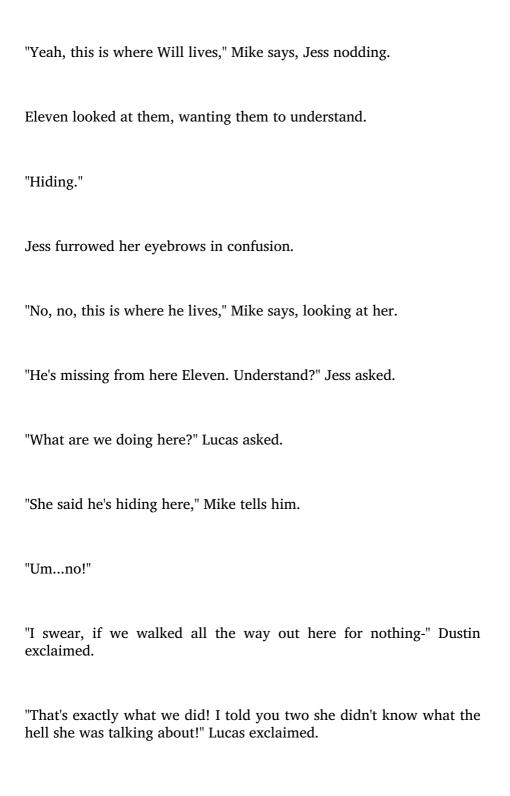


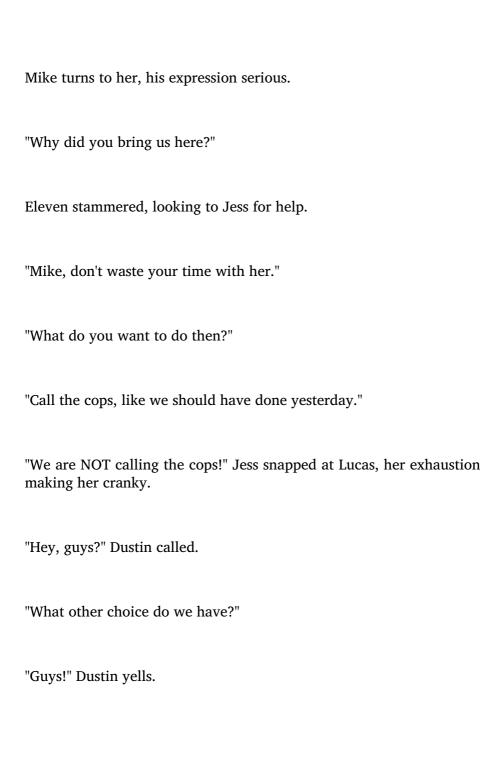


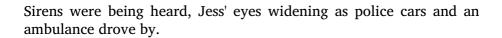












"Will..." she and Mike says.

Jess was the first to hop on her bike, this time not waiting for Mike and Eleven.

She just rode in the direction the ambulance went, panting madly, tears threatening to pour as she leads the group by how fast she rode, her adrenaline kicking in.

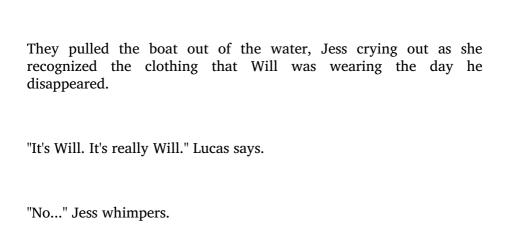
"Por favor...no dejes que Will esté muerto...por favor...(Please...don't let Will be dead...please...)" she cried, riding faster and faster.

They ended up in the quarry, Jess hopping out of her bike, hiding behind the ambulance truck.

She felt someone grab her hand and she already knew it was Dustin, though she didn't care, as she, the boys, and Eleven watched in horror as they pulled a boy's body from the water.

"Eso no puede ser Will...eso no puede ser...(That can't be Will...that can't be...)" Jess gasped, tears running down.

"It's not Will. It can't be." Mike says, Jess shaking her head in denial.



Dustin hugged her, rubbing her back as she cried.

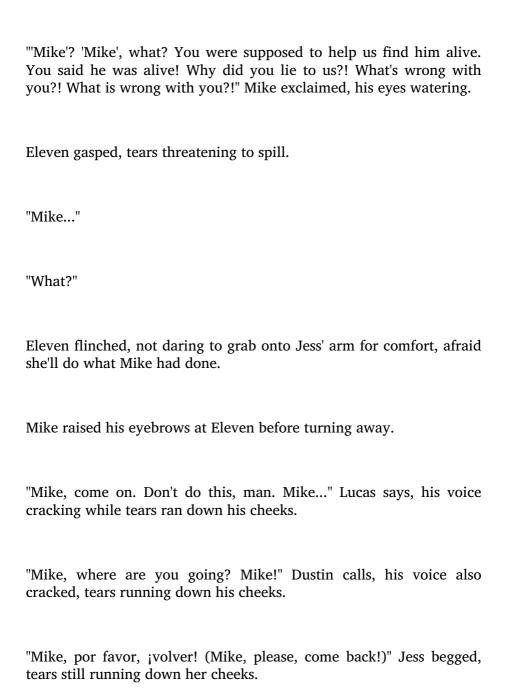
She turned, to comfort Mike, when Eleven walked over to him, trying to talk to him.

"Mike..." she whispered, reaching out to him.

He hits her arm down, glaring at her.

"Mike!" Jess gasped, walking over to Eleven and pushing her behind her.

She was upset at Eleven as well but, there was no need to hit her arm like that.



They watched as he grabbed his bike, getting on and riding away.

Jess sobs, grabbing the boys and hugging them both, all of them sobbing out for the loss of their best friend.

Eleven watched, tears running down, not knowing what to say.

She knew Will was alive, just in a different dimension.

But the evidence for Will being dead, no matter if it was fake, was too overwhelming.

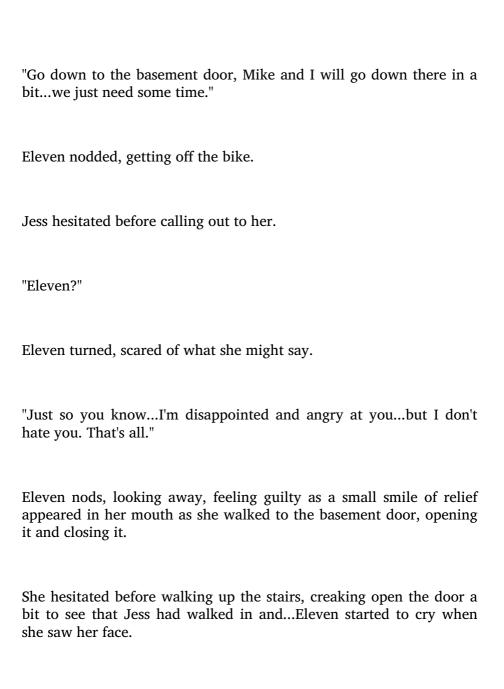
Jess pulled from their embraces, kissing both boys on the foreheads, all of them taking shaky breaths.

"Come on Eleven, let's go home."

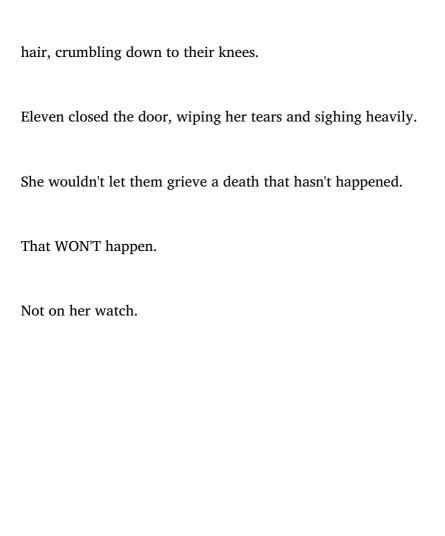
Jess got on her bike, looking to Eleven with a betrayed glance.

Eleven hopped on, hesitating before wrapping her arms around her waist.

Jess rode off, not saying anything on the way to the Wheelers.



Jess had walked towards Mike, her lips trembling as he released from his mom's hug and they both grabbed onto each other, letting out more sobs as they clutched the back of their shirts and bits of their



11. Chapter 11

Summary for the Chapter:

Eleven gets a makeover, learns what a 'hug' means, and gets to go to school with Jess and the boys.

Mike was looking through some of the drawings Will had made and left at his place while Jess was curled in a ball on the floor, the Star Wars hoodie Will gave for her 12th birthday on.

Eleven was toying with Mike's Supercomm again, this time changing the channel every second.

"Can you please stop that?" Mike asked, irritated.

Eleven looked up, stopping for a second before going back to playing with it.

"Are you deaf?!" Mike asked, his anger showing.

"Michael Wheeler..." Jess warned, looking at the freckled boy.

"No Jessica Hernandez! She needs to listen what I have to say!"

Jess sighed, frowning.

"I thought we were friends, you know? But friends tell each other the truth. And they definitely don't lie to each other. You made us think Will was okay, that he was still out there, but he wasn't. He wasn't!"

Eleven opened her mouth to say something, but closed it, thinking against that idea.

"Maybe you thought you were helping, but you weren't. You hurt me, AND Jess. Do you understand? No offense to Jess' first language, but you made her speak only in Spanish for three HOURS. That's how sad she was. What you did sucks."

Eleven looked at the latina on the floor, playing with the hoodie strings.

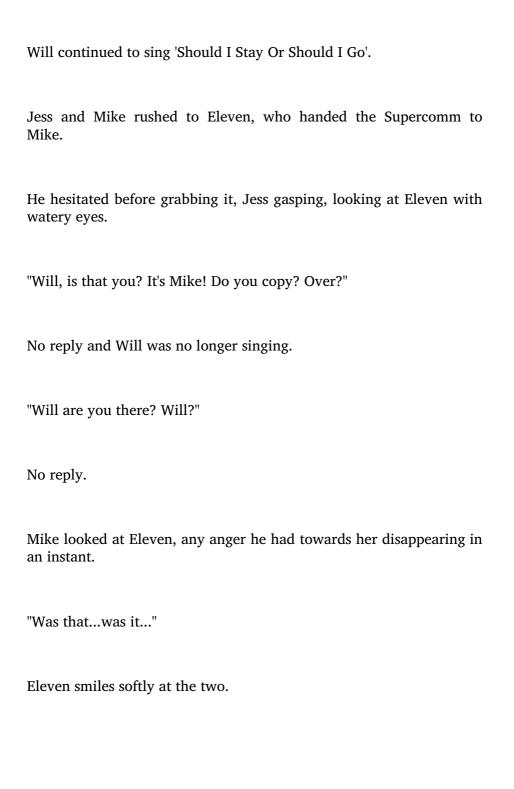
"Lucas was right about you. All along."

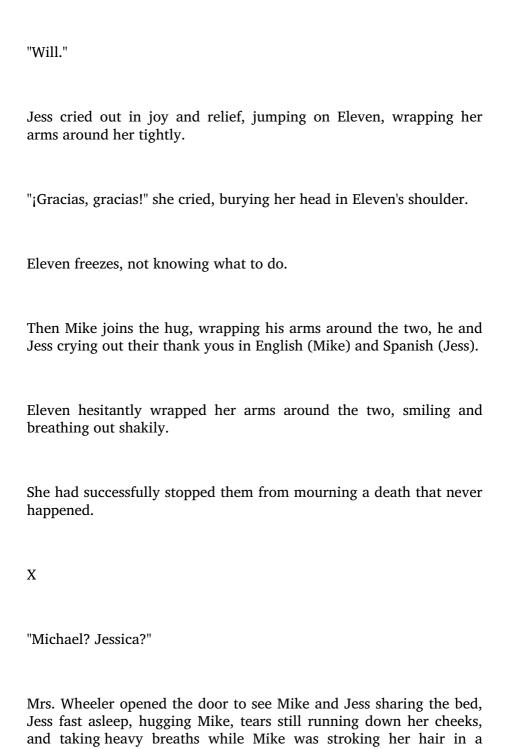
"Mike! That was too far and you know it!" Jess growled, her forehead bangs sticking to her face from the dried tears on her cheeks.

Eleven continued to play with the Supercomm, using her powers when she found the station she wanted.

Jess' eyes widened when she heard Will singing through the Supercomm, Mike looking up to Eleven in disbelief.

Jess turned to Eleven, seeing the blood running down her nose as





comfortingly-brotherly way.

She was really selling this, 'My best friend is dead and I'm depressed about it' act.

Even though, it wasn't really something to be proud of and laugh about.

"Hi, honey. How are you and Jess feeling?"

"I...uh...I don't think we can go to school today. Jess was still speaking in fluent Spanish before we went to bed and she had a night terror in the middle of the night so, she crawled into bed without me knowing. She's still shaken up a bit."

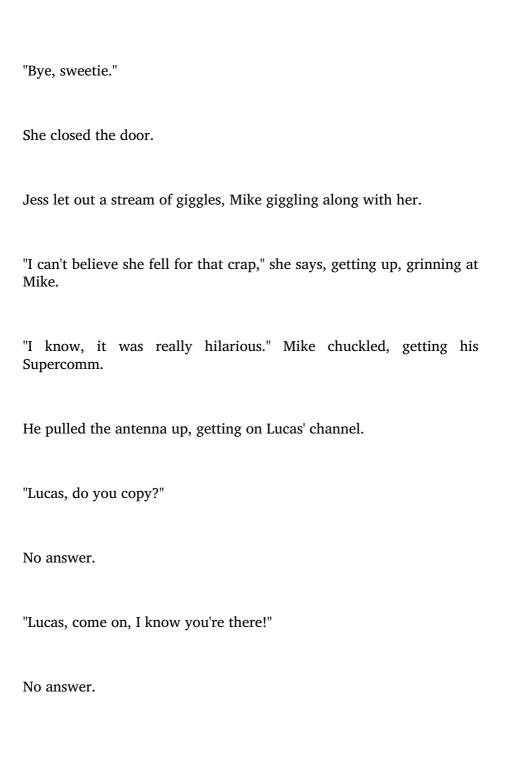
"Oh, that's fine, sweetie. I need to drop off Nance, then I'm gonna check in with Barb's parents. Why don't you grab a book or something and come with me? We can stop by the video store on the way back, pick out whatever you want. Even R-rated."

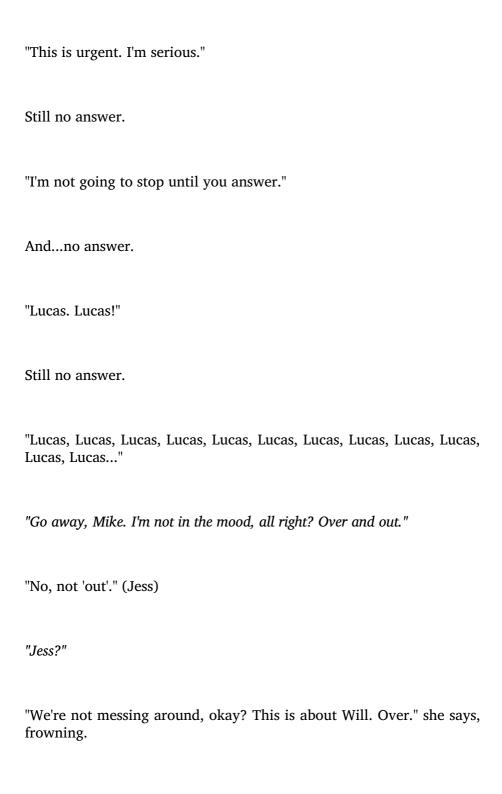
"What about Jess?" Mike asked, the girl still crying.

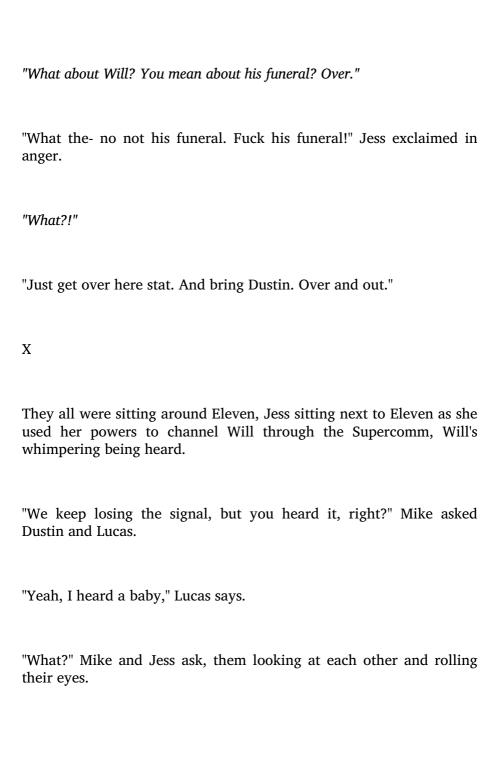
"Jess really looks like she needs her sleep and we don't want to wake her up if we aren't going to understand what she's saying if she's still speaking in fluent Spanish."

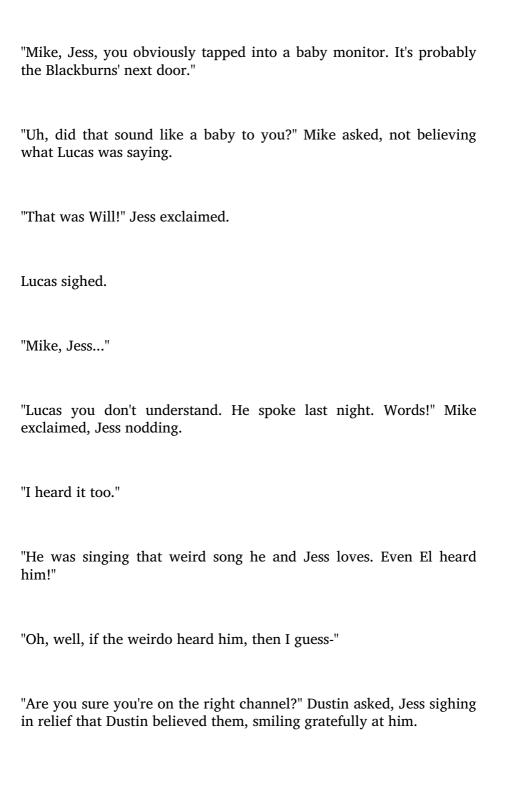
Mike REALLY wanted to roll his eyes when she said that but

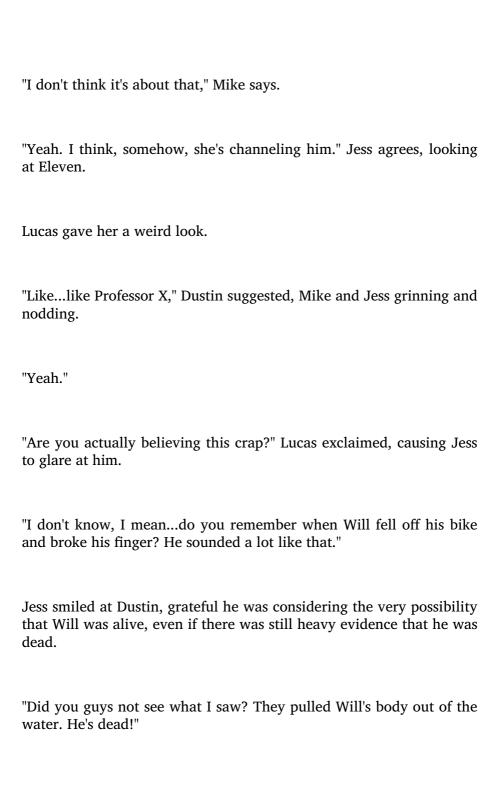
refrained himself from doing so.
"I think I just want to stay home today, be with Jess. I can understand some of the things she says thanks to Spanish class so I think I'll be good if she's still speaking fluent Spanish when she wakes up. I meanif that's okay?"
"Well, are you sure you're gonna be all right with Jess all by yourself?"
"I think so, we've been friends for 5 years now. I think I can handle being with my best friend for a bit when she needs me."
Mrs. Wheeler sighed.
"Okay. But if you need anything, call Dad at work."
"Okay."
"Okay."
Mrs. Wheeler pecked Mike's forehead, leaving the room.
"Bye."

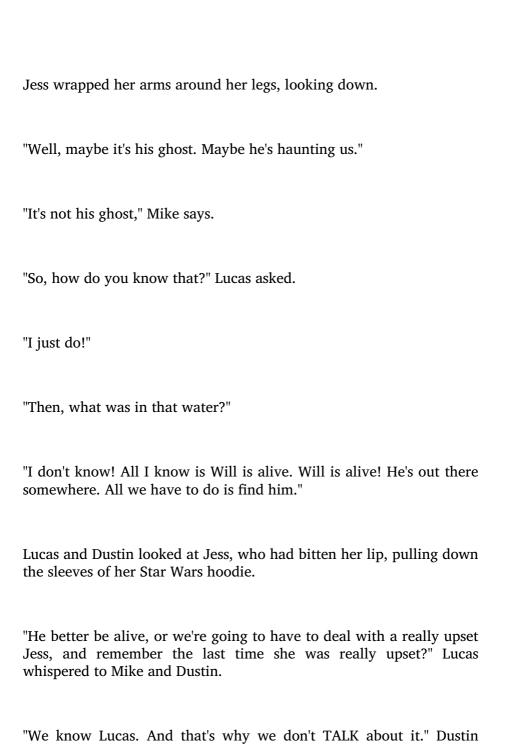


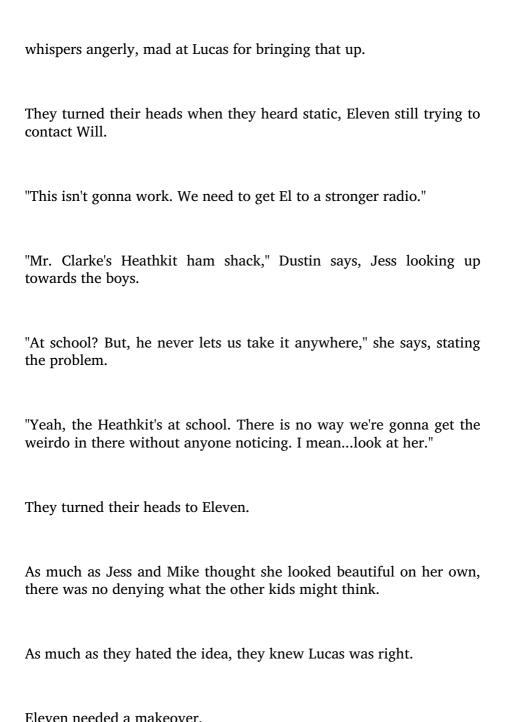












Eleven was sitting across from Mike, Jess who had gotten Nancy's makeup kit, gave it to Mike and he opened it.

He grabbed the blush brush and the blush, opening it and patting it on it.

Eleven leaned in and he leaned in as well, following Jess' instructions on how to put it on, Jess trying not to laugh at Eleven's reaction to it touching her skin.

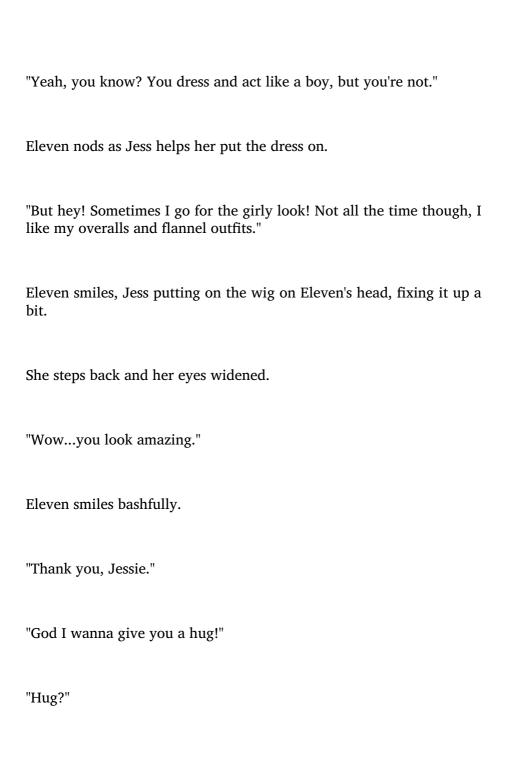
Jess also told him how to put on the pink chapstick, making sure to tell him to put it on softly on her lips, so he doesn't accidentally hurt her.

Mike looks at her after he's done, nodding and saying 'yeah.'

Then it was Jess' turn to help her with the dress and wig Lucas and Dustin picked out for her.

"Okay, the boys have a good sense of style, though, I'm more of a tomboyish kind of gal."

[&]quot;Tomboyish?"



"Yeah, what I did when we first heard Will through the Supercomm. It's to wrap your arms around someone and squeeze them to show affection. You can either squeeze lightly or you could squeeze tightly. Hugs also depend on the type of person you're hugging. I can't really explain it, but, you have to pay attention to the way people hug you. Some people's hugs are good, some are not. They have to include three major things; the feeling of being safe, the feeling of being loved, and the feeling of being cared for."

Eleven looked confused.

"Maybe one day in the future you'll understand it. Now come on! Let's go show the boys!"

X

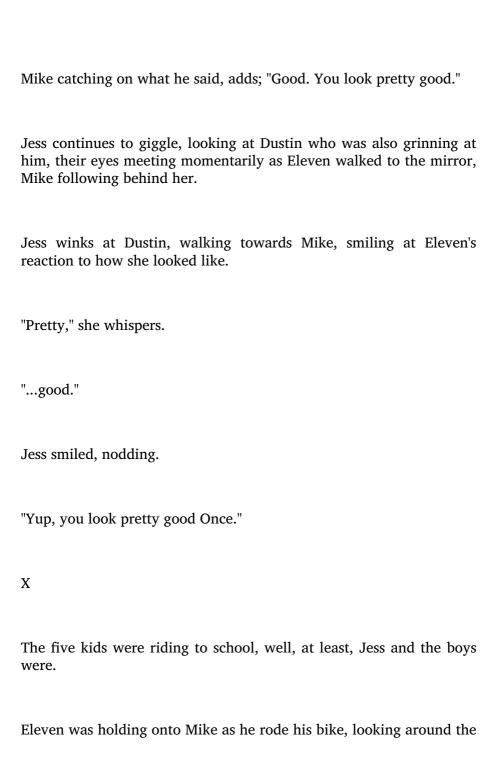
Jess opened the door, smiling at the boys before moving aside, revealing Eleven, who walked up, looking towards Jess and then back at the boys.

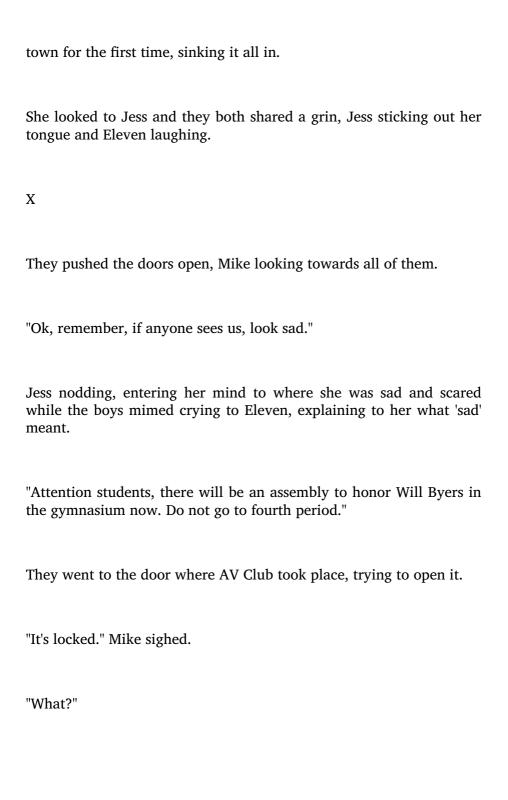
Mike looked star struck.

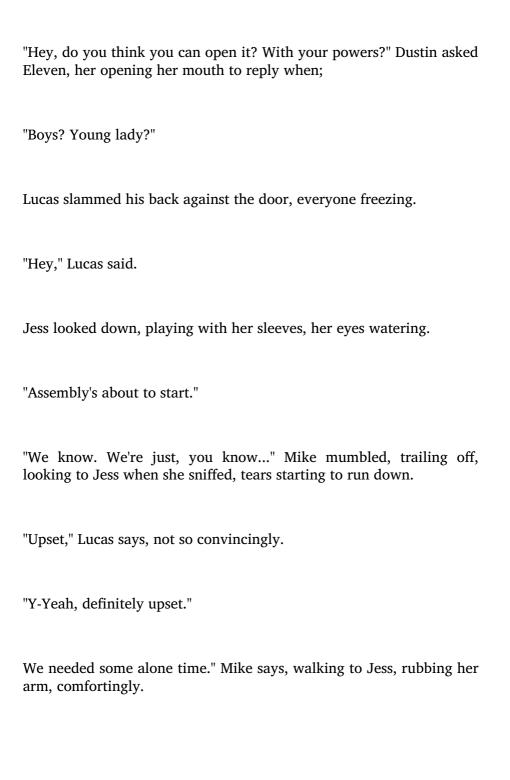
"Wow, she looks-"

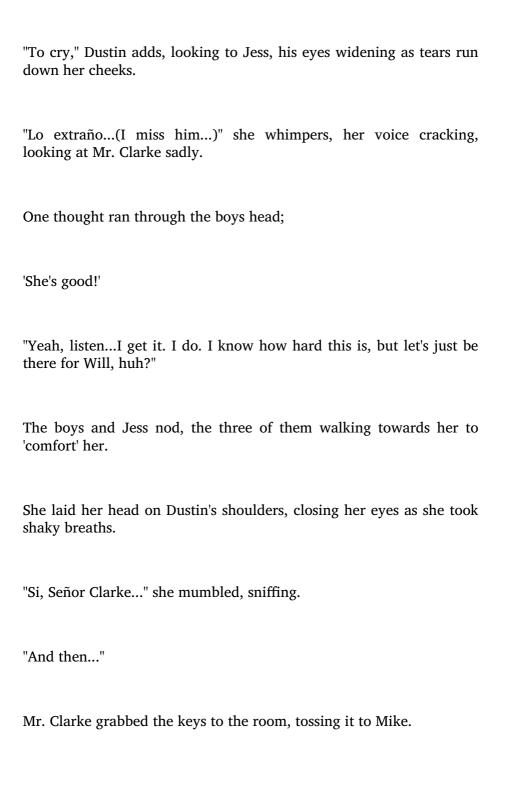
"Pretty." Mike interrupts Dustin.

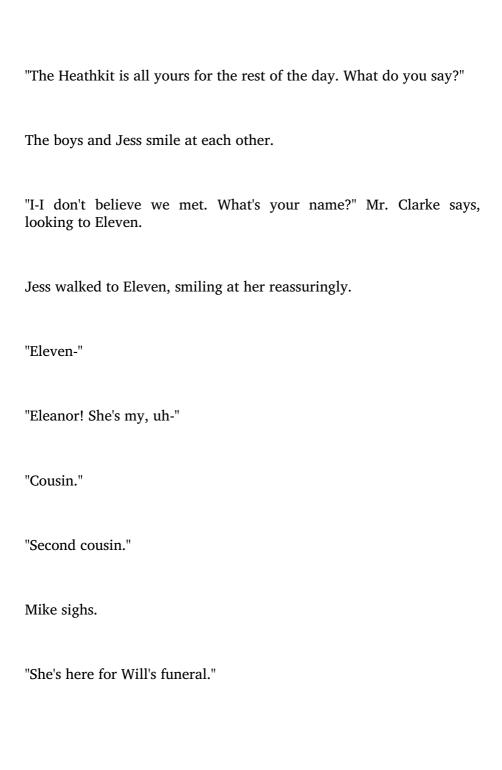
Jess giggled while Eleven smiled.

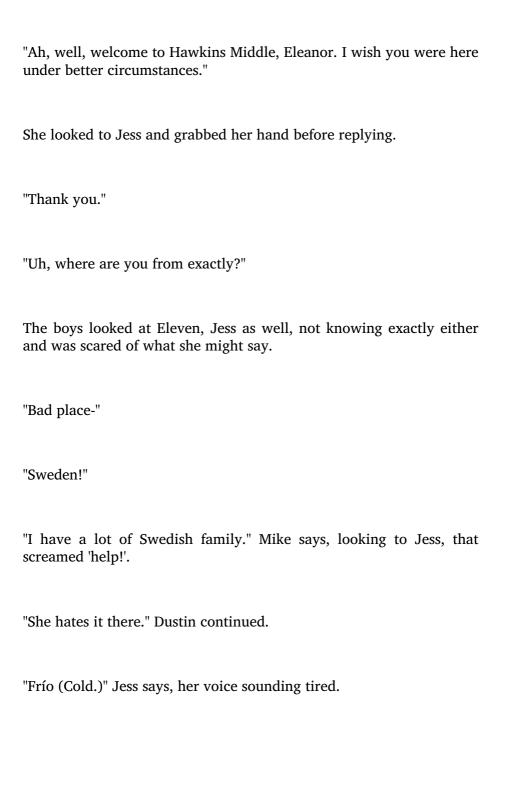


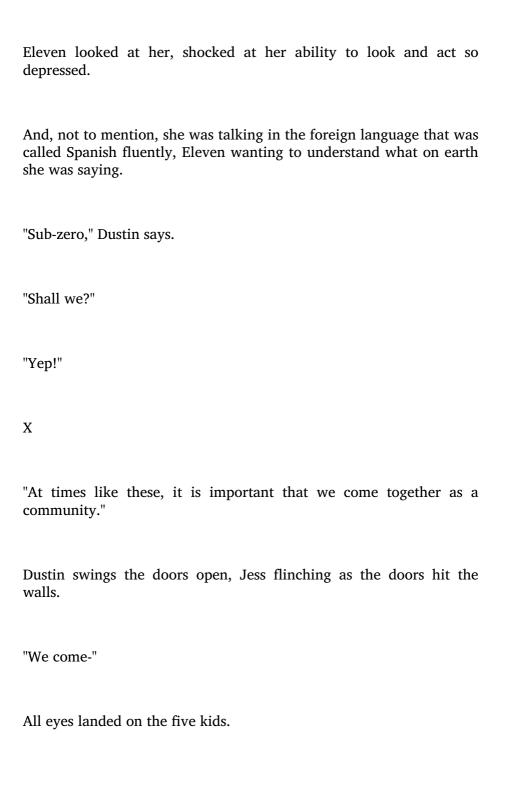


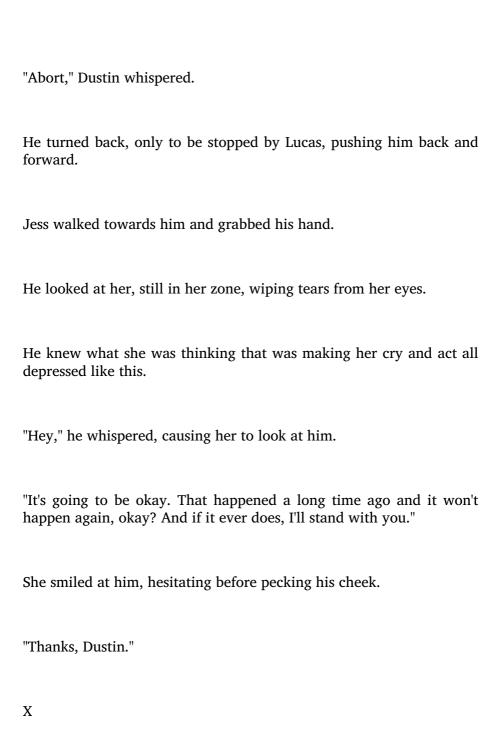












"Will Byers' death is an unimaginable tragedy. Will was an exceptional student and a wonderful friend to all of us. It's impossible to express the hole his loss will leave in our community. I'd like to introduce you to Sandy Sloane, she's a local grief counselor from the church over in Jonesboro."

Jess was sitting between Eleven and Dustin, her zone disappearing slowly, causing her to just play with the sleaves of her flannel shirt.

She was disgusted on how many fakers there were in the school.

She and Dustin shared a glance and smiled at each other, Jess blushing a soft pink.

"Look at these fakers," Mike said, causing her to turn to him.

"They probably didn't even know his name till today." Lucas agreed.

They heard snickering, all of them looking up to see Troy and his minion, James scoffing.

"Who is interested in this? This is so stupid."

Jess formed her fists, her face turning red.

"Blah, blah, blah, blah..."

Eleven looked to see Jess' face had turned red, her fists tightening.

She placed her hand on top of her right fist, causing Jess to relax it slightly.

"Oh, he was such a great student. Oh, he's going to leave a hole in the community." Troy mocks, James snickering.

"Mouthbreather." Eleven states, Jess nodding as Mike looks at her.

The mocking continues but, Jess tries to ignore it as she intertwined her fingers with Eleven's hand, Eleven doing the same with her and Mike, who also intertwines his fingers with her's.

X

The school bell rings, the three of them, still holding hands walked down the steps, Lucas and Dustin following behind them.

But, Jess and Mike weren't going to let what they saw and heard go past them and Eleven noticed as they both let go of her hands, looking worriedly at the two.

"Hey! Hey! Hey, Troy! Hey, Troy!" Mike called, causing the bully and his minion to turn to the two, Jess glaring at them.

"You...You think this is funny?"

"¿De verdad crees que esto es hilarante? (You really think this is hilarious?)" Jess exclaimed, baring her teeth.

"What'd you say, Wheeler? And Hernandez, quit speaking Mexican for a second, I can't understand you." Troy sneered.

Mike grabbed Jess' hand, looking at her to calm down before she could punch Troy, and then looked back at him.

"W-We saw you guys laughing over there. And I think that's a real messed up thing to do." Mike stammered, Jess glaring at them.

"Didn't you two listen to the counselor, Wheeler? Hernandez? Grief shows itself in funny ways." James said, Jess exhaling angerly through her nose.

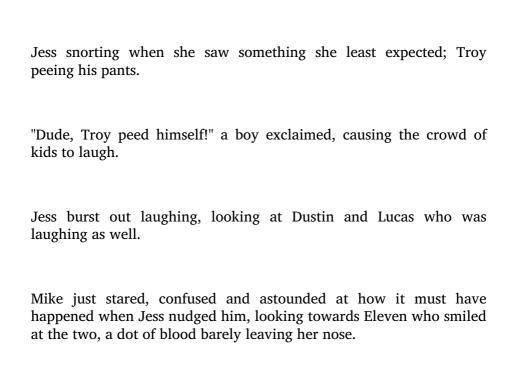
"Besides, what's there to be sad about, anyway? Will's in fairyland now, right? Flying around with all the other little fairies. All happy and gay."

Troy imitated a fairy, Jess' jaw squaring. All she wanted to do was to punch Troy's face in. Eleven looked at Mike and Jess, giving them a look to 'go get him!' And they did. Mike and Jess, letting go of their hands walked over to Troy, Jess tapping on his shoulder and punching him, Mike pushing him down. Jess panted, grabbing Mike's hand again, both of them squeezing tightly in a brotherly-sisterly-friendship way. "You're dead Wheeler, Hernandez! Dead!" Troy yelled, getting up and running to attack them.

He suddenly stopped, causing Jess to furrow her eyebrows in confusion, looking to Dustin and Lucas who were reacting the same way.

She looked at Mike, who glanced at her too, both of them sharing confused glances.

Mike and Jess looked down when they heard a tinkling noise and



She wipes it off, turning to leave, grinning at Jess' wink as Mike

"Mike, Jess! Let's go!" Lucas calls to them, Mike still grinning widely at Jess who just winks at him, agreeing with what he was thinking in

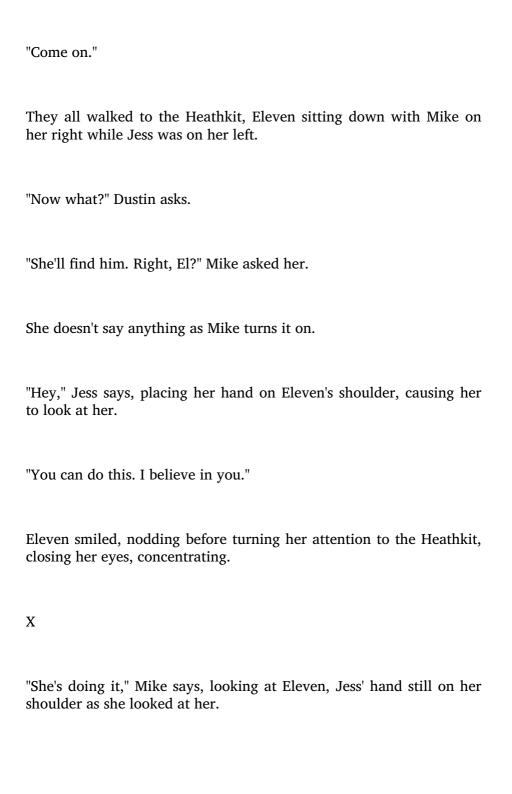
looked back to Jess, both of them laughing together.

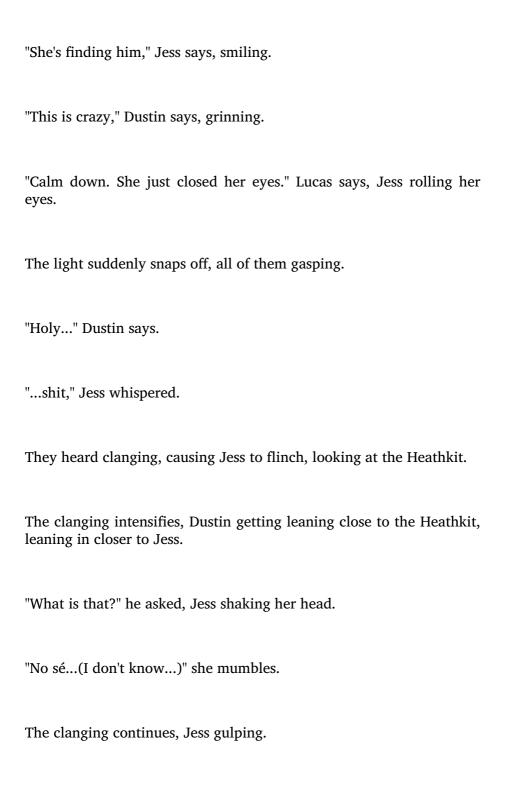
Mike locked the door while Jess turned on the light.

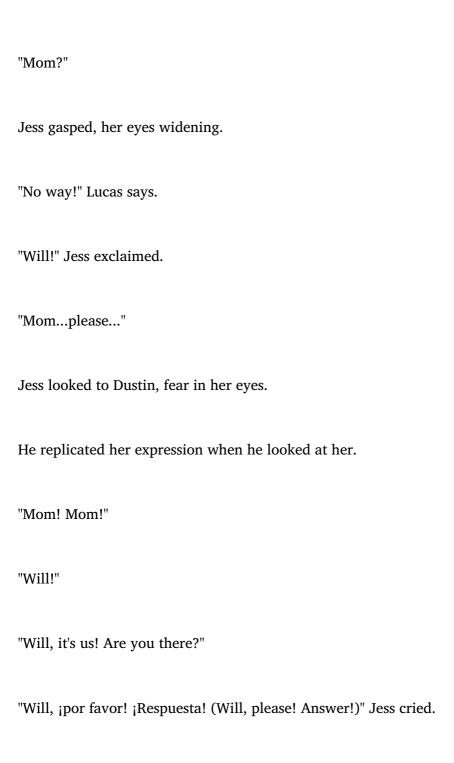
his head;

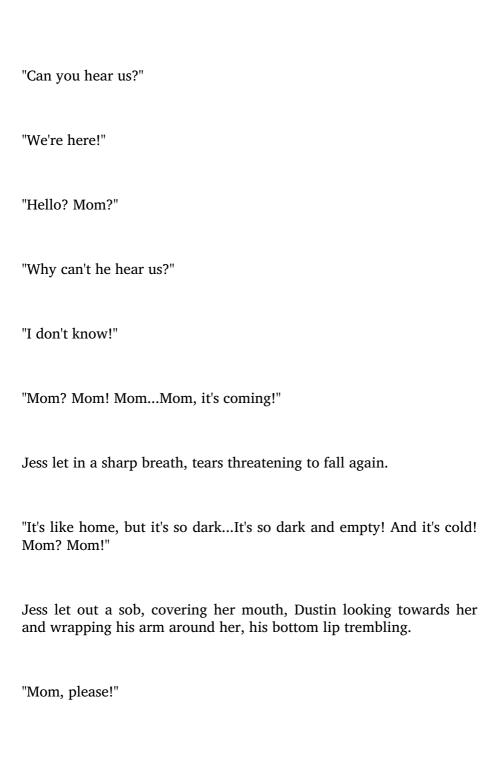
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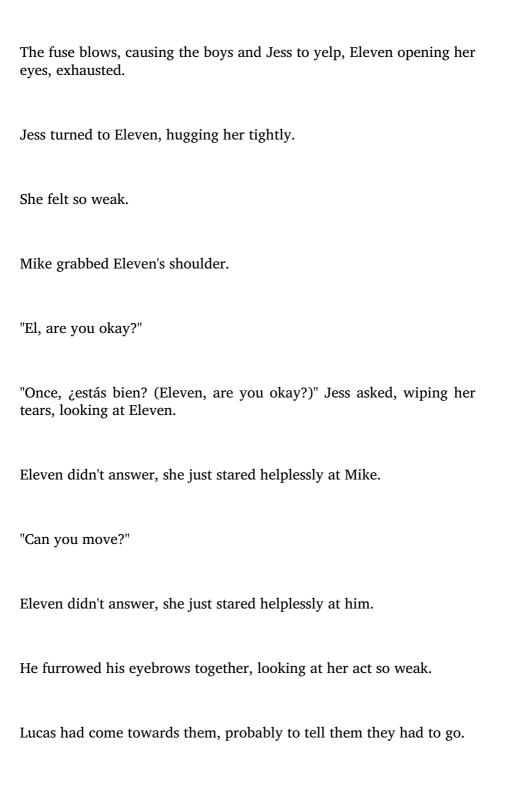
'Eleven's such a badass!'

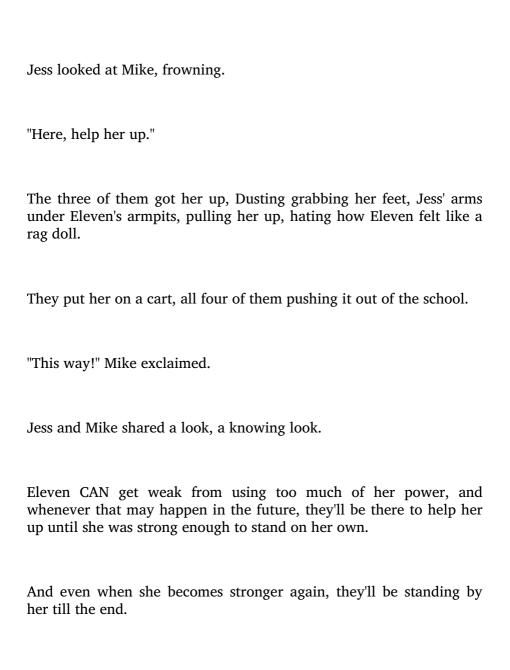












12. Chapter 12

Summary for the Chapter:

Dustin and the boys comfort Jess while at Will's 'funeral', knowing that funerals give her horrible memories.

They were back at Mike's house, Eleven laying her head on Jess' lap on the couch, still exhausted from using too much of her powers.

"What was Will saying?" Mike asked, Jess, looking across the couch to where he was sitting.

"Like home...like home...but dark?"

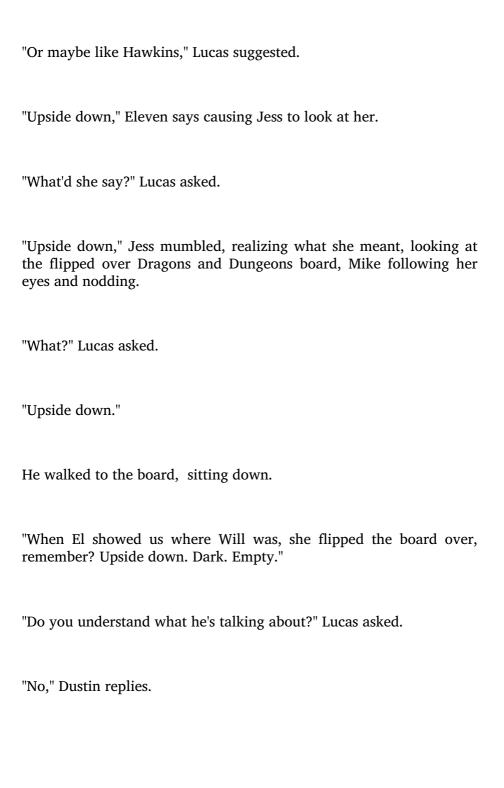
"And empty," Lucas added, sighing.

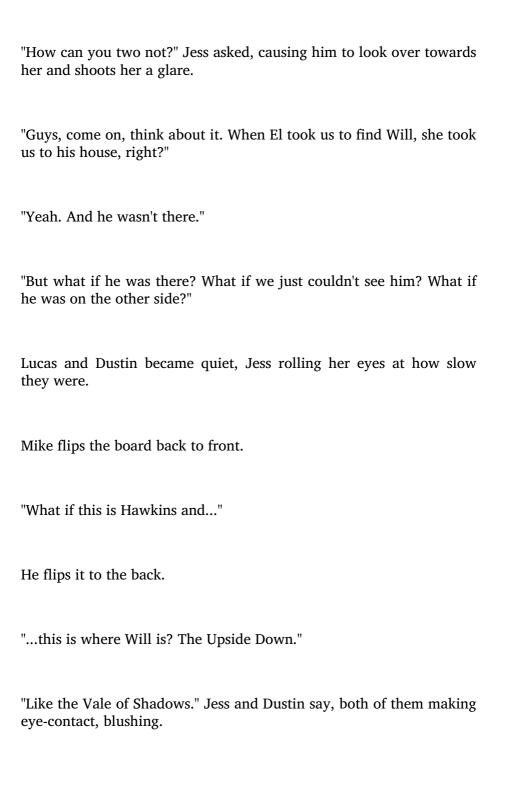
"Empty and cold. Wait did he say cold?" Dustin asked, Jess shrugging.

"I don't know. The stupid radio kept going in and out."

"It's like riddles in the dark," Dustin says, looking up.

"Like home. Like his house?" Mike asked.





Dustin got the folder explaining the game Dungeons and Dragons, flipping the pages until he went to the one explaining the Vale of Shadows.

"The Vale of Shadows is a dimension that is dark reflection or echo of our world. It is a place of decay and death. A place out of phase. A place of monsters...It is right next to you, and you don't even see it." Dustin says, pausing and fearfully looking at the boys and then his eyes landed on Jess, saying the last sentence as if it was a rude awakening.

"An alternate dimension," Mike whispered.

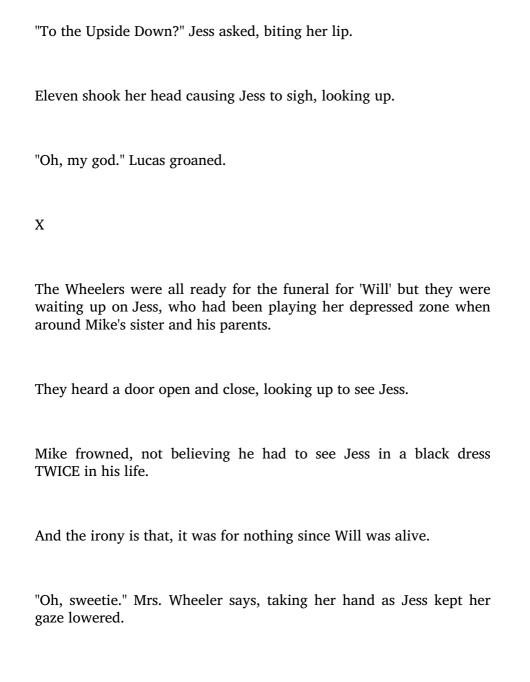
"But...how...how do we get there?" Lucas asked.

"You cast Shadow Walk," Dustin replies.

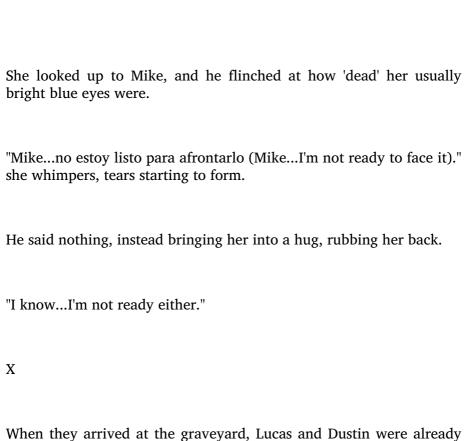
"In real life, dummy."

"We can't shadow walk, but...maybe she can," Dustin says, looking at Eleven.

They turn to Eleven, Jess looking down at Eleven.



"Do you know how we get there?" Mike asked.



When they arrived at the graveyard, Lucas and Dustin were already there, talking.

Lucas looked up, and he actually looked sad, hitting Dustin to turn and look.

Dustin did and he furrowed his eyebrows in worry, seeing Mike with his arm around Jess as they walked towards them.

To hear of the boys being sad to see Jess in a black dress again is something that would be unheard of to the adults but, they were.

The reason was...the last time she wore a black dress was a week after The Accident happened and it completely destroyed Jess, having to wear a black dress that stripped her of the safety of her flannels and overalls.

And the boys knew that then, and they DEFINITELY know that now.

Dustin pulled her from Mike, giving her a tight hug, knowing she definitely needed it.

She may not be 'mourning' for Will's 'death', but funerals always gave her bad memories, no matter whose they were.

When she pulled away and turned to Lucas, the boy hugged her tightly as well, also aware of the painful memories that funerals give her.

Mike and Dustin soon also joined in, hugging each other as Jess finally let the tears run, burying her face into Lucas' chest as she let out shaking sobs.

They were there to comfort Jess then, they are there to comfort her now, and will always be there to comfort her when she needs it.

X

"Fear not, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. It's times like these that our faith is challenged. Now, if He is truly benevolent...could God take from us someone so young, so innocent?"

Jess had her head lowered down, tears running down as the Pastor continued, that same damn wording haunting her.

Dustin had grabbed her hand and squeezed it softly when he recognized the quote, remembering hearing it 3 years ago. He remembered seeing Jess sobbing uncontrollably, unable to wipe away her tears and he wasn't able to hold her hand and reassure her that everything will get better.

This time, he was there to assure her that he was next to her, and that he was with her.

She felt him nudge her and he nudged Lucas and motioned to Mike to look to see Jennifer Hayes was crying.

"Just wait till we tell Will that Jennifer Hayes was crying at his funeral."

Mrs. Wheeler shushed them, but Dustin grinned when he Jess nudged him and gave him a small smile, shaking her head and then leaned close to his face.

"You're an idiot Dustin," she whispered in his ear, making sure that

the adults didn't hear her speak English.

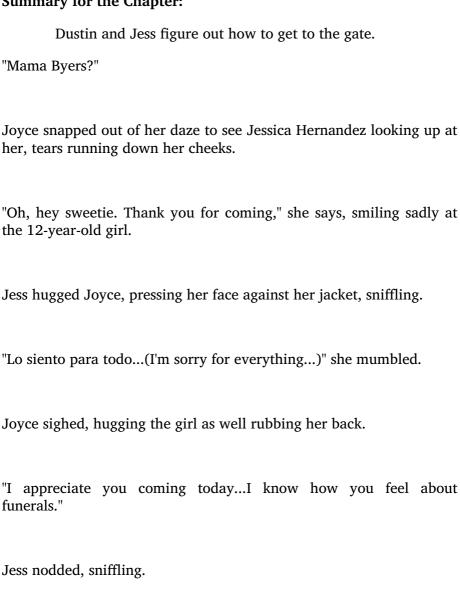
He smiled at her and she smiled back before returning back to her zone, the smile and happy mood that he put her in for 15 seconds vanished.

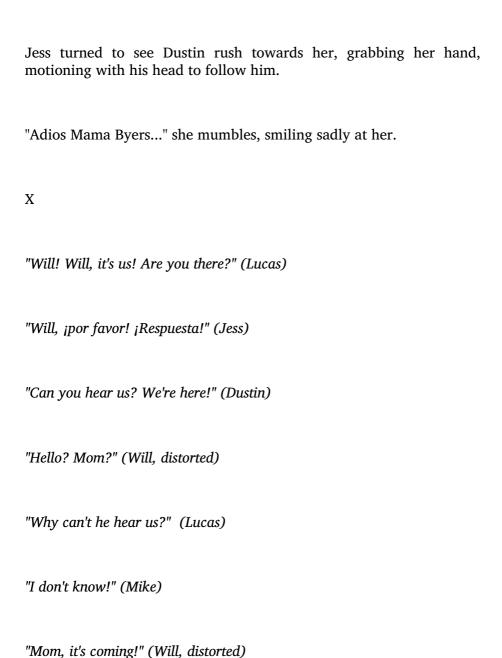
But, he was glad that he at least made her smile in a place that gave her horrible memories.

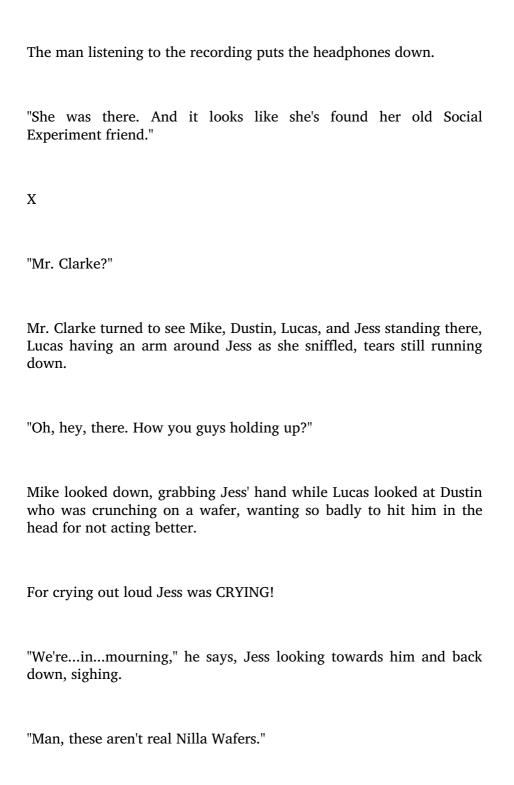
13. Chapter 13

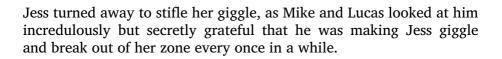
Summary for the Chapter:

"Jess!"









"We were wondering if you had time to talk?" Mike asked.

"We have some questions," Lucas added.

"Un montón de preguntas (A lot of questions)." Jess says, deciding to stop the 'mourning' for a second so she empathize how important this was without having to drop the speaking in fluent Spanish.

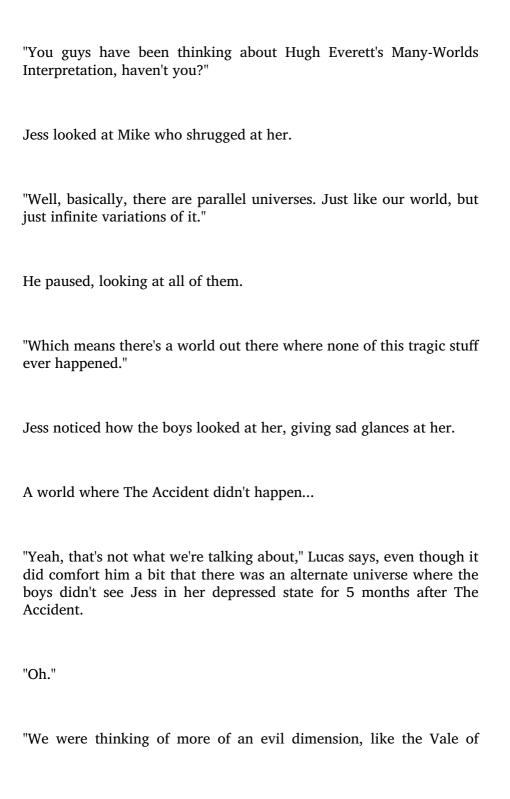
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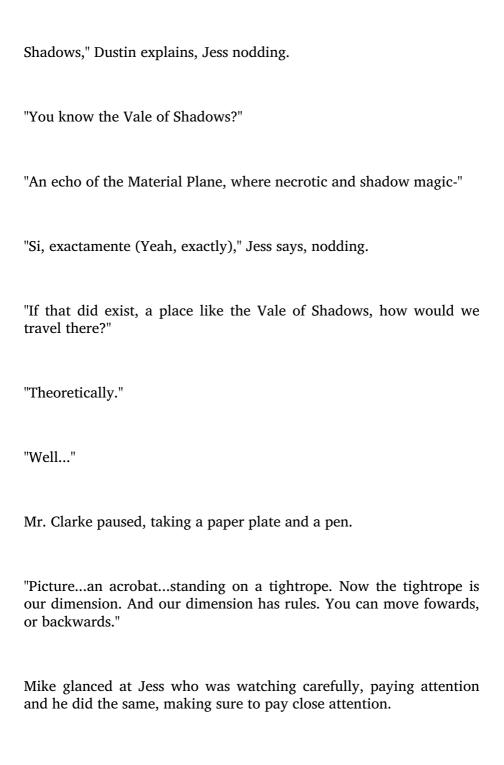
"So you know how in Cosmos, Carl Sagan talks about other dimensions? Like, beyond our world?"

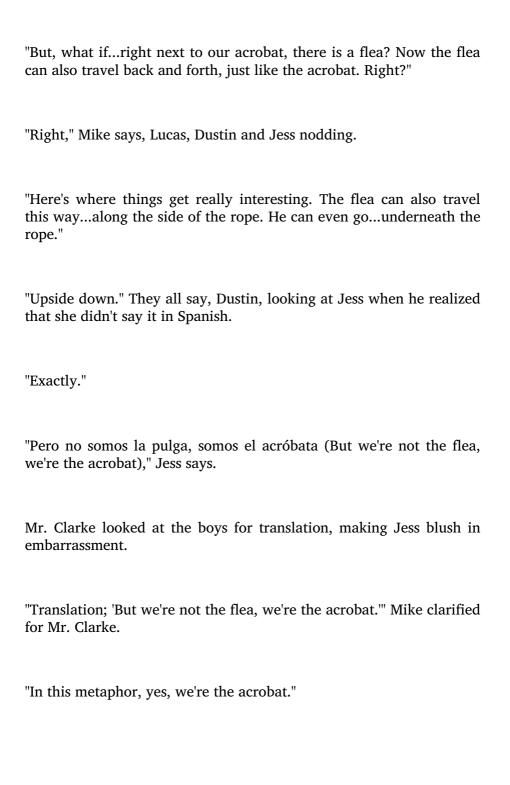
"Yeah, sure. Theoretically."

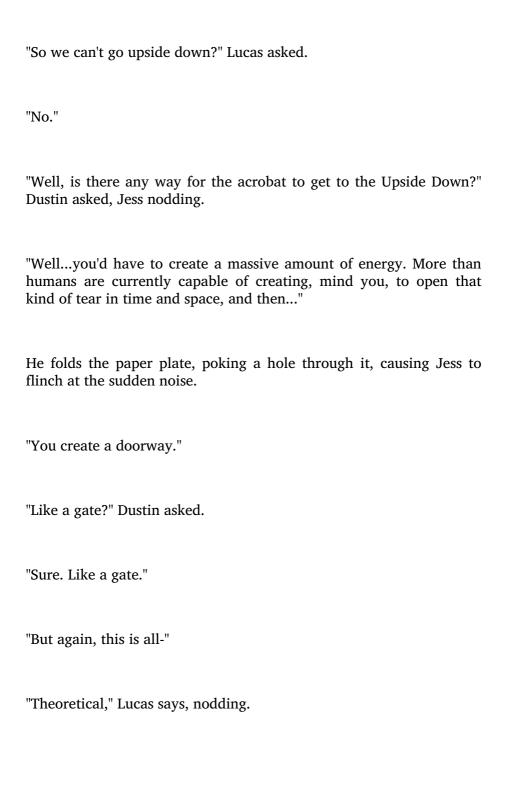
"Right, theoretically," Mike says, Jess, nodding along.

"So, theoretically, how do we travel there?" Lucas asked.









"But...but what i-if this g-gate already e-existed?" Jess stammers, Dustin widening his eyes to see Jess trying to speak English in her depressed zone.

He wasn't the only one in shock, Mike grabbed her hand and squeezed it, Lucas giving her a small smile.

"Well, if it did, I...I think we'd know. It would disrupt gravity, the magnetic field, our environment. Heck, it might even swallow us up whole."

Jess widened her eyes, looking at Mike.

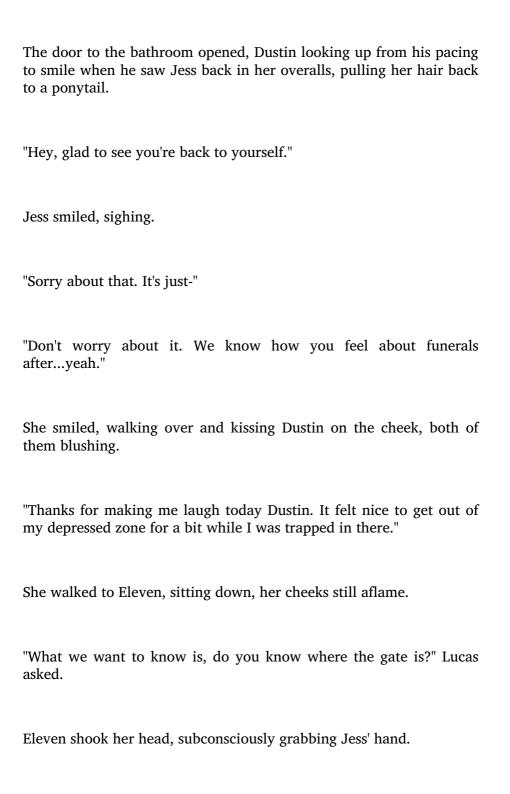
"Science is neat. But I'm afraid it's not very forgiving."

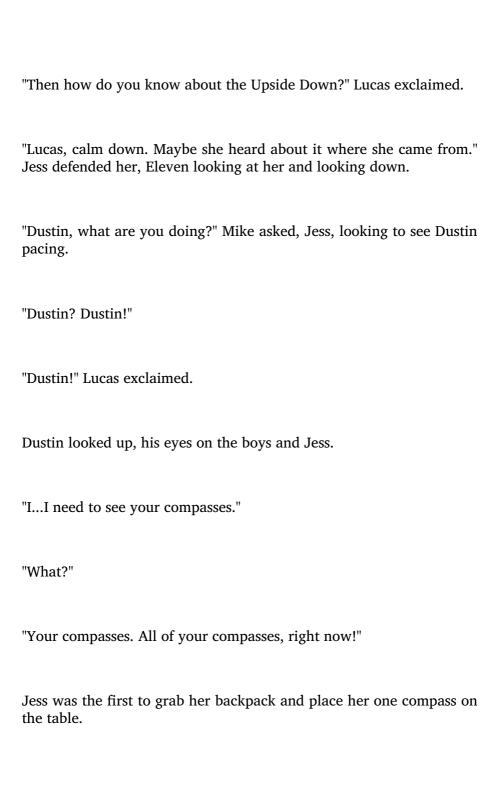
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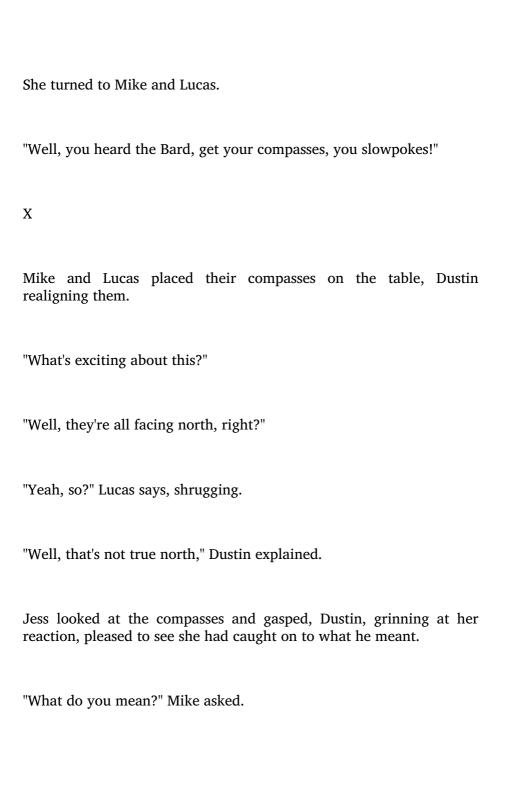
Mike poked a hole through the piece of paper, Eleven widening her eyes at the sound.

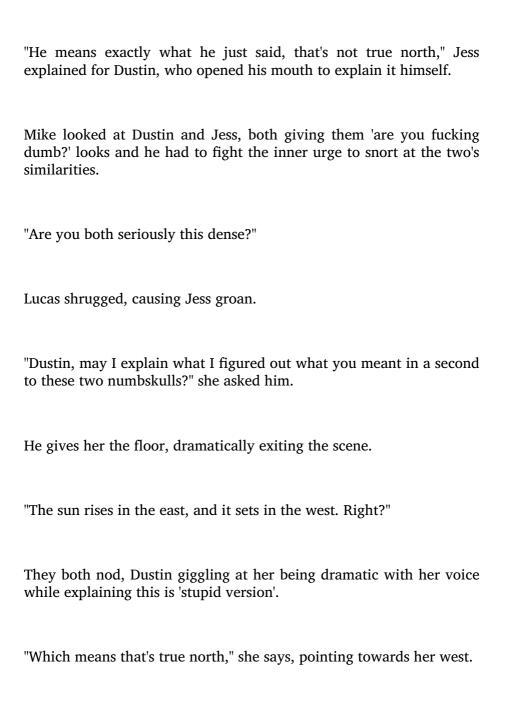
"It would take a lot of energy to build a gate like this. But that's got to be what happened. Otherwise, how'd Will get there, right?"

"Right."



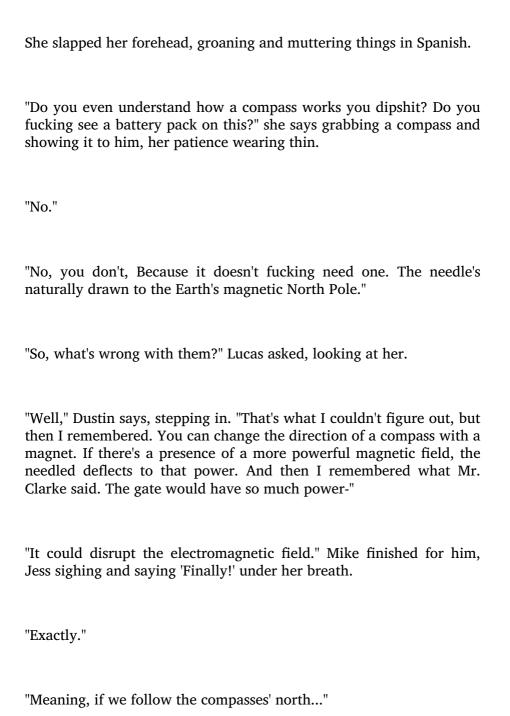


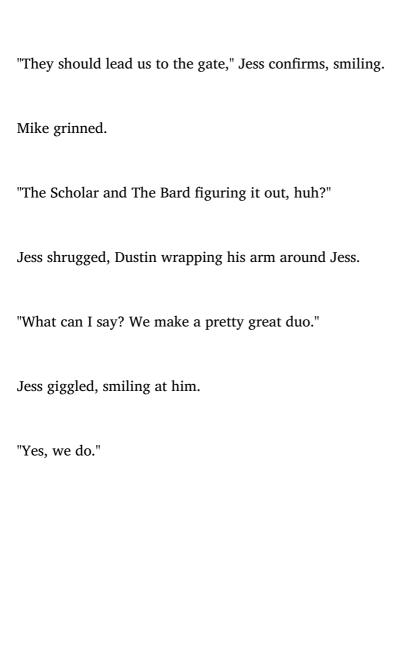




"So what you're saying is the compasses are broken," Mike says,

causing an eye-roll from Dustin.





14. Chapter 14

Summary for the Chapter:

Lucas and Mike get into a fight about Eleven, Lucas says something really sensitive to Jess that results in her running off, and Eleven flings Lucas off Mike. Result? The Party is falling apart.

The five kids were walking down the tracks, Dustin carrying the compass and leading them the way.

Jess was walking next to Eleven's right, Mike on her left.

Eleven was breathing heavily and Jess figured it was from the walking and she couldn't say they were almost there if she didn't know it herself.

Eleven grabbed onto Mike, looking at him.

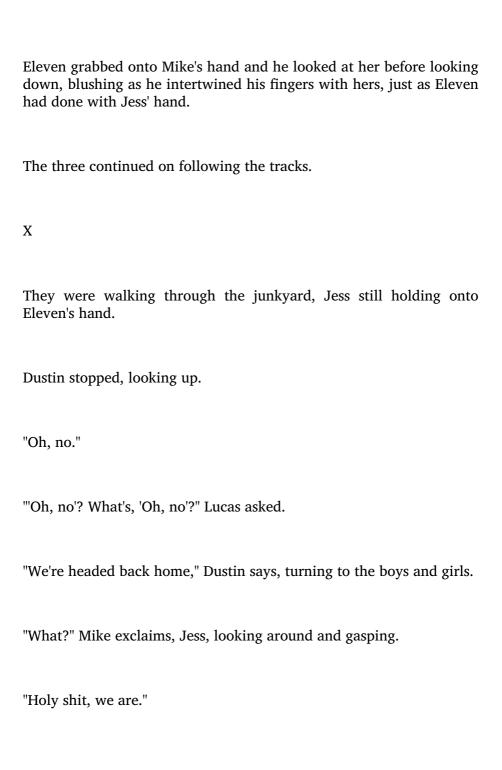
"Mike."

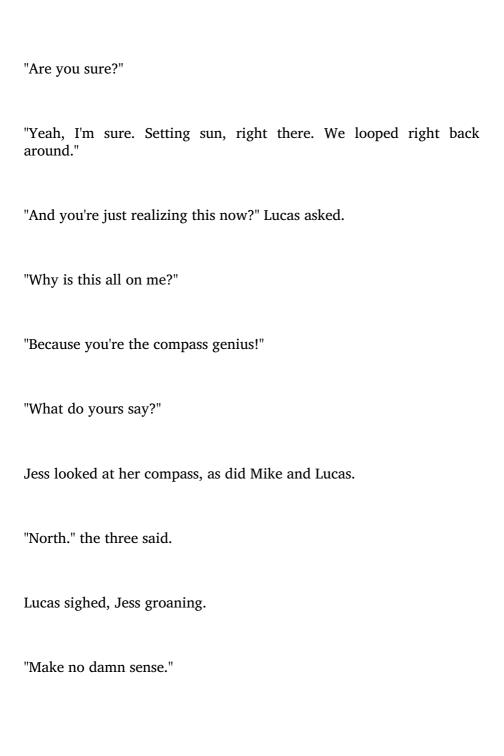
"Yeah?"

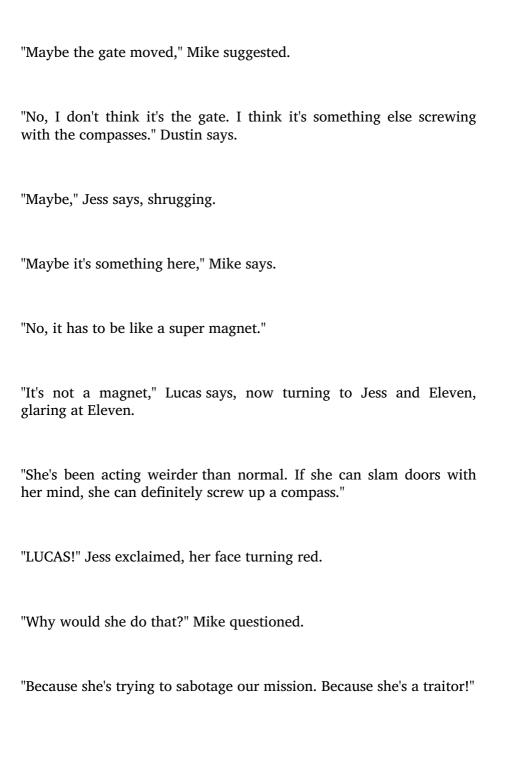
"Turn back," she says, looking now also turning to Jess to let her know she was also included in this conversation.

"What? Why?" Jess asked, furrowing her eyebrows together.









He started walking up towards her, Jess glaring at Lucas.

"Lucas, what are you doing?" Mike asked, walking towards him, Eleven getting a fearful look in her eyes and squeezed Jess' hand tightly.

"Lucas Sinclair, think about what you're doing," Jess warned, narrowing her eyes.

"You did it, didn't you? You don't want us to reach the gate. You don't want us to find Will." Lucas asks, ignoring Jess' warning.

"Lucas, come on, seriously, just leave her alone!" Mike exclaims, Jess pushing Eleven behind her, glaring at Lucas.

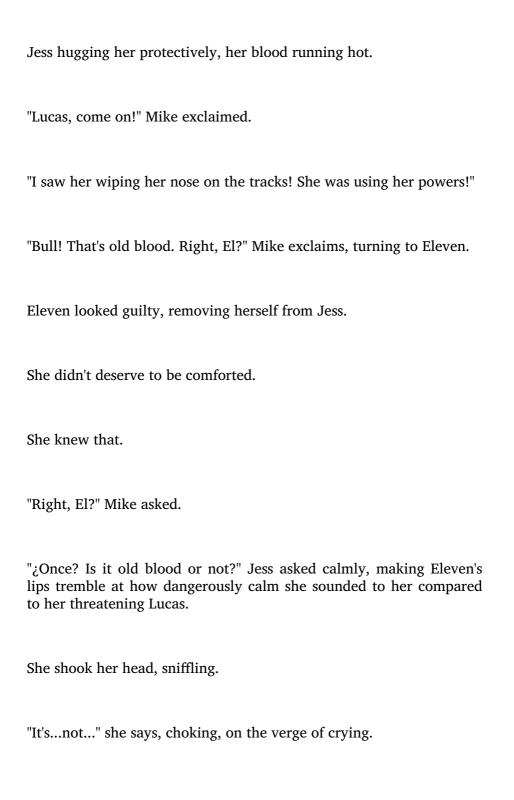
"Lucas Sinclair, I'm warning you. BACK.OFF." she hissed.

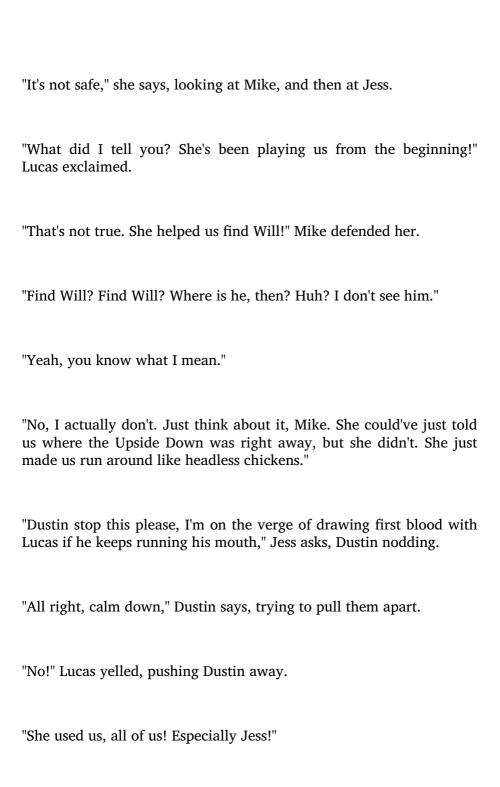
"Admit it," Lucas demanded.

"No." Eleven whispers.

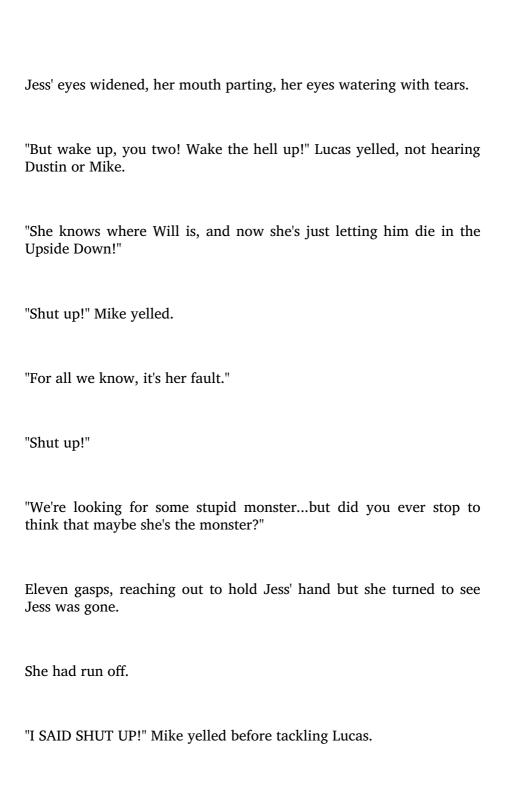
"Admit it!" Lucas roared, causing Eleven to flinch, grabbing her arm, blood staining the jacket sleeve on the jacket she had on.

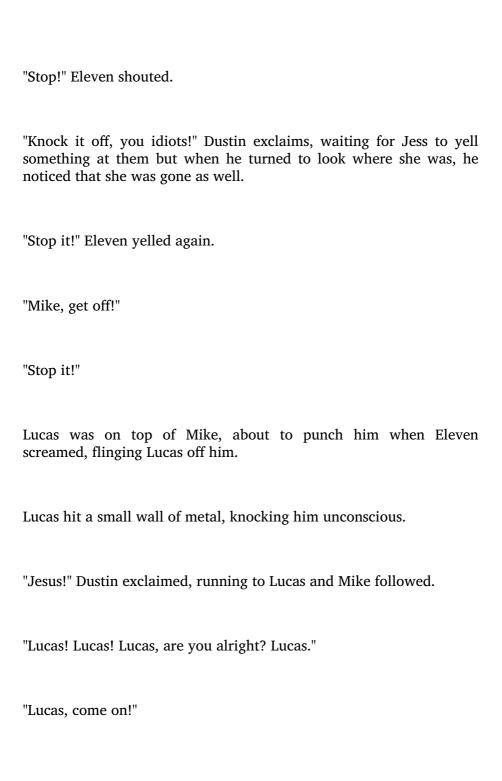
"Fresh blood. I knew it!" Lucas exclaimed, hitting Eleven's arm down,

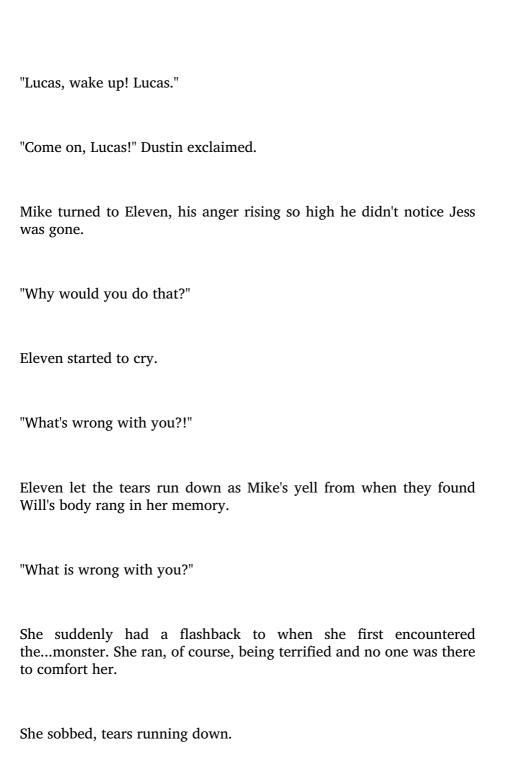


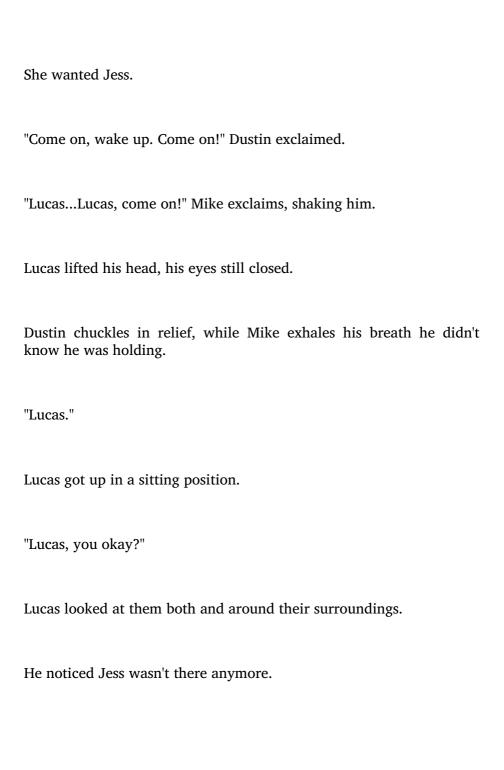


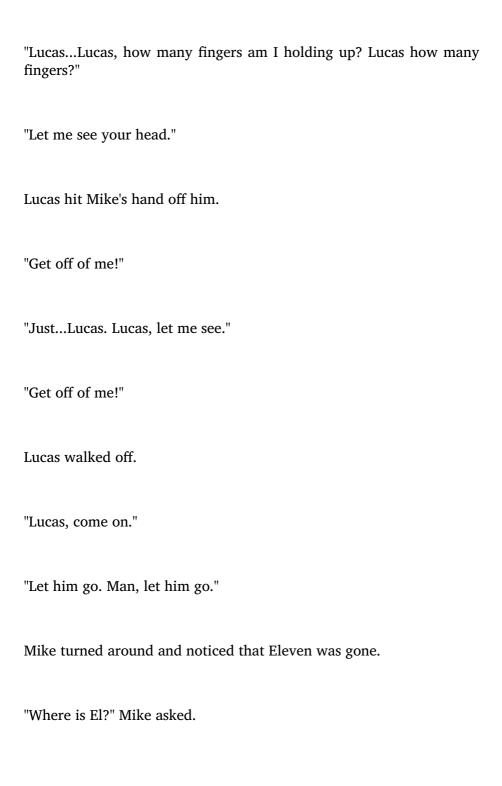


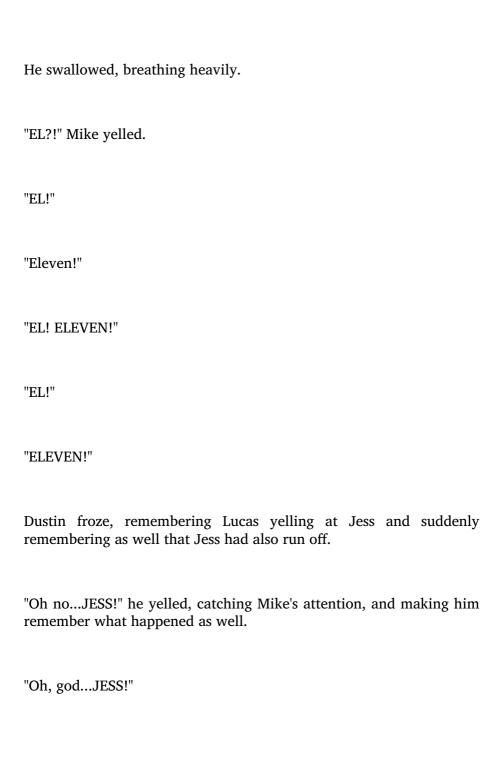


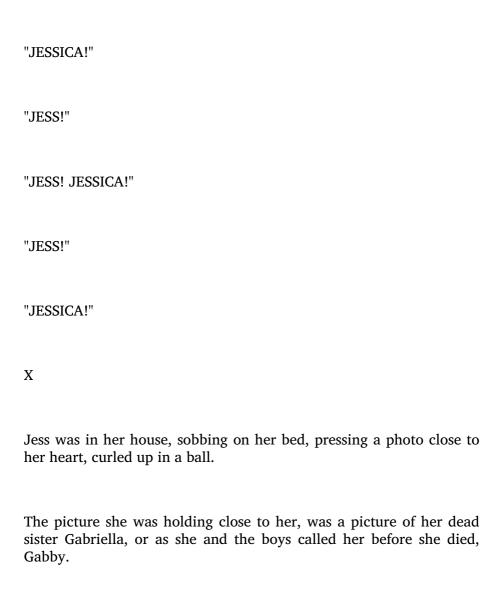












15. Chapter 15

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess is upset with Mike for yelling at Eleven without thinking of what he was saying and tells him to 'think before he talks'. Dustin comes over and hugs Jess.

Mike was worried.

EXTREMELY worried.

First of all, Eleven didn't come home last night, neither did Jess.

Second of all, Mike regretted yelling at Eleven for flinging Lucas off him.

She didn't mean to hit him against that wall of metal, it was an accident.

But third of all, he knew Jess was extremely upset, and that was all thanks to Lucas for accusing her of replacing Gabby.

He groaned, covering his face with his hands.

Why did he have to bring up Gabby?! And on the day they had Will's funeral?!

They all swore to never bring up Gabby or talk about her unless Jess mentions her, and Lucas threw that out of the window, and in the WORST way possible!

He drew first blood on Jess, and even though it wasn't a physical attack, it was an EMOTIONAL attack.

Dustin was extremely worried as well, and he made Mike promise him that he'll call him as SOON as he knew where she was or if she came home.

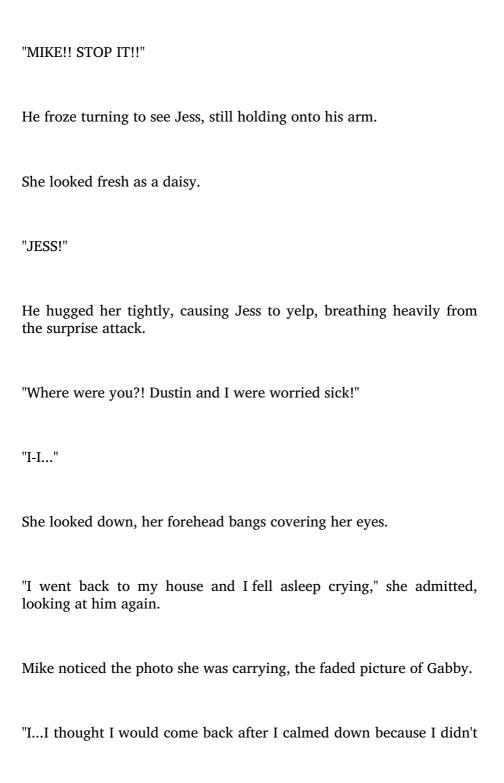
Mike made him promise the same thing, just in case she went to his house and not his.

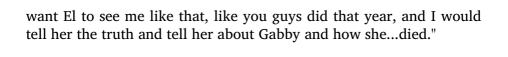
Mike looked over at the door and to Eleven's fort.

He felt sudden anger and regret wash over him, as he stood up and walked over towards the fort and started destroying it, throwing the chair and blanket aside and started kicking it.

He was so upset that he didn't hear the door open and the gasp that came when the person saw what he was doing.

All he felt was was someone pulling him back.





Mike frowned, looking at her.

"What Lucas said wasn't-"

"I know Mike, I'm not stupid. Of course, El isn't a replacement for my sister, she never was. No one could replace Gabby, not even if they tried. Gabby will ALWAYS have a place in my heart...same as Eleven. No one could replace her. And I don't think they could with her powers..."

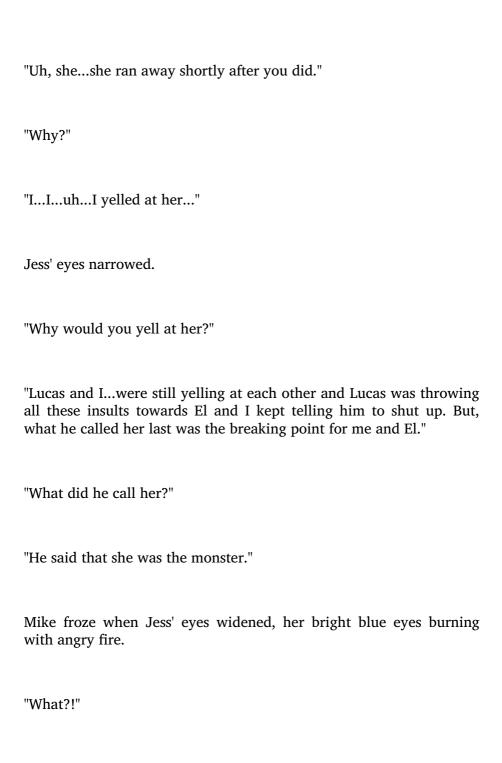
They both laughed, Jess' nose wrinkling up in a cute way.

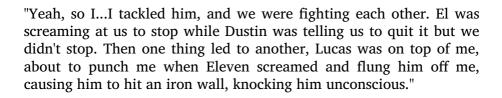
"But, even if they did, they couldn't replace her. No one could. El is El and Gabby is Gabby. They're two different people that have places in my heart. They're both my sisters."

Mike smiled and she smiled back, only to frown, realizing the big thing.

"Wait...where IS El?"

Mike gulped, praying to God he would survive the latina's anger after she found out that El ran away shortly after she did because he...yelled at her.





Jess widened her eyes.

"I may be super furious right now at Lucas but, was he okay?"

"Yeah he was, took us a while to wake him up though. But, while we were trying to wake him up I yelled at El."

"What did you yell at her?"

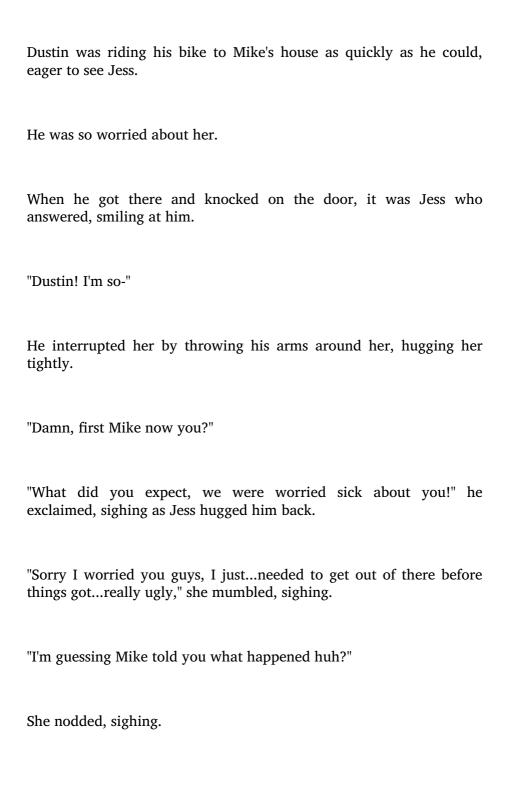
"I yelled at her why would she do that and...."

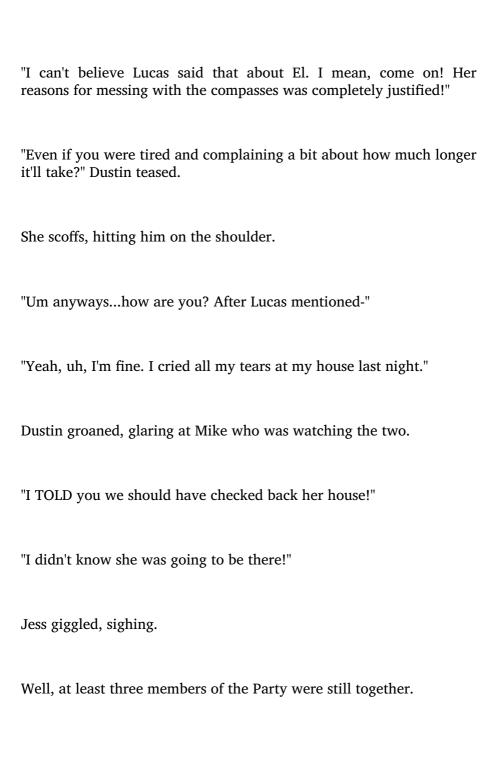
Mike hesitated, looking down in regret.

"What was wrong with her..."

Jess groaned, slapping her forehead.







Now they just need to reconcile with Lucas and find Eland then find Will.

16. Chapter 16

Summary for the Chapter:

After a failed attempt to get Lucas to shake Mike's hand and apologize to Jess, they go to search for Eleven.

"I just...I can't believe she didn't come back." Mike sighed, pacing.

"She's gotta be close," Dustin says, reassuring Mike and Jess, who was also very worried.

"She said it wasn't safe. She just messed up the compasses because she wanted to protect us. She didn't betray us!" Mike exclaimed.

"Mike, calm down."

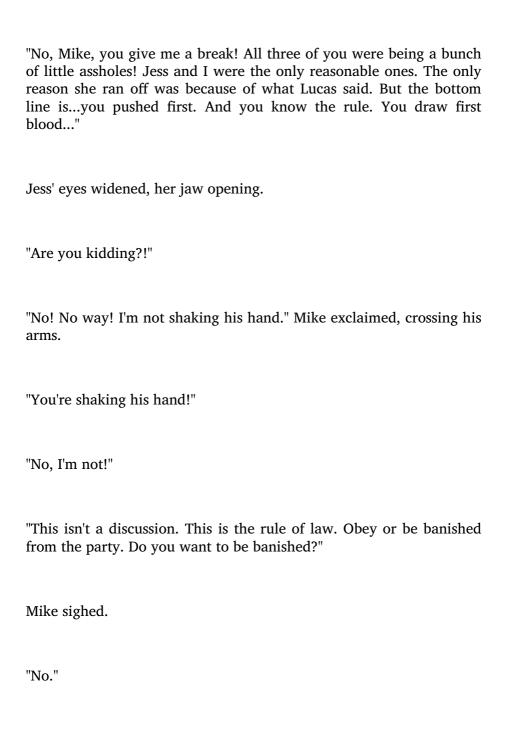
"I shouldn't have yelled at her. I never should've done that."

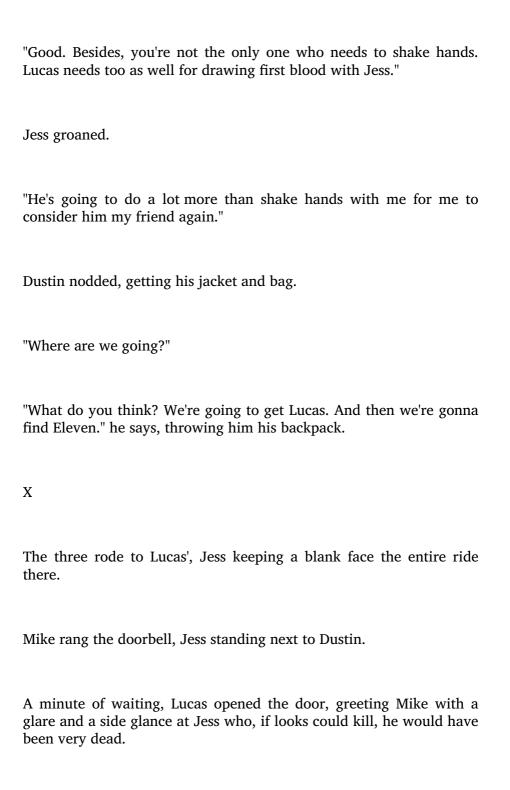
"Mike this isn't your fault," Jess says, looking at him.

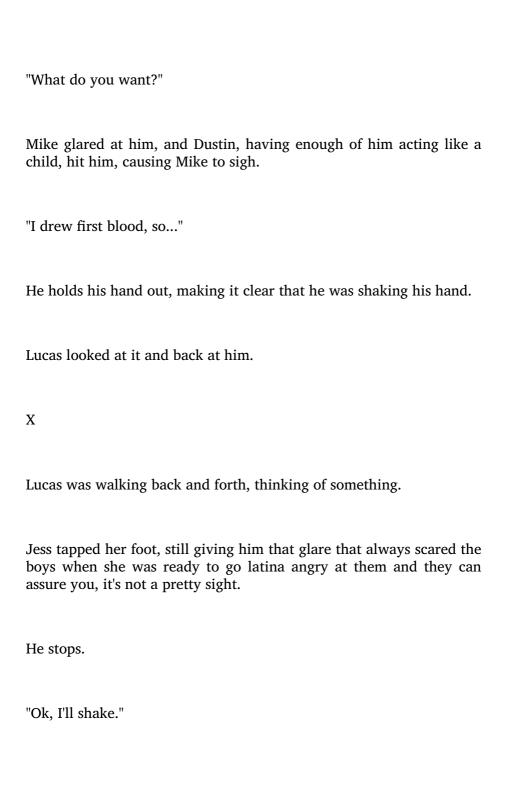
"Yeah, it's Lucas'," Mike says.

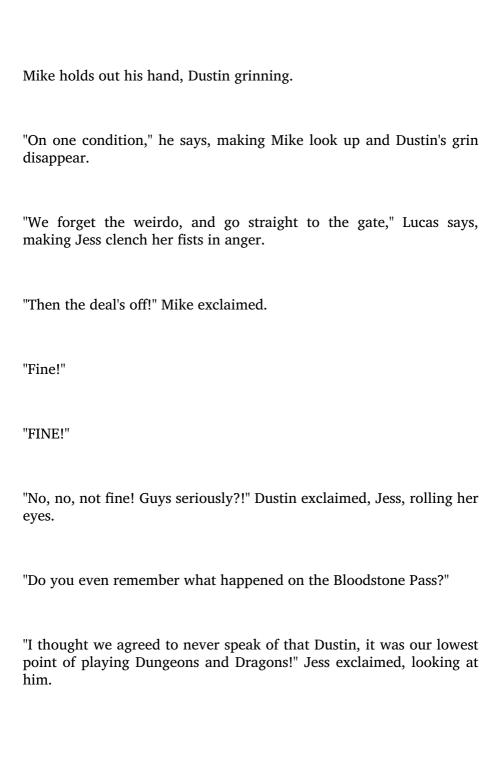
"It wasn't his fault either...well...except for the part of accusing Jess," Dustin says, pausing and adding the last part.

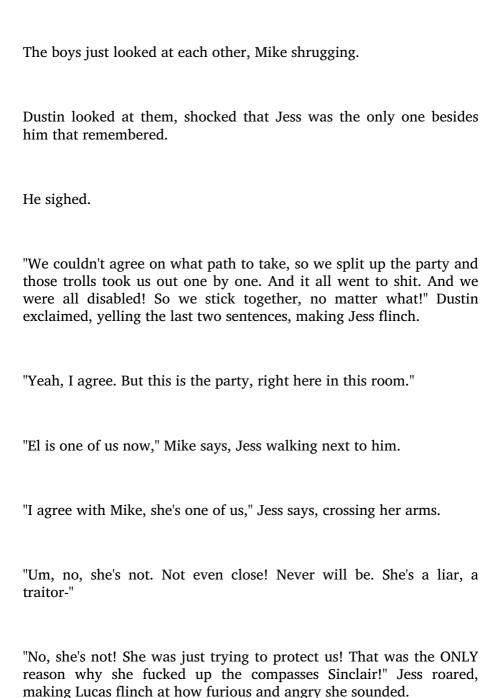


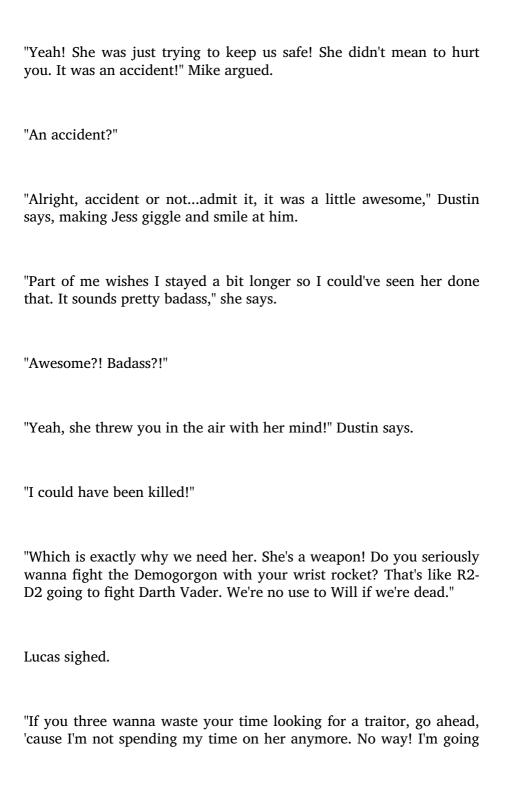


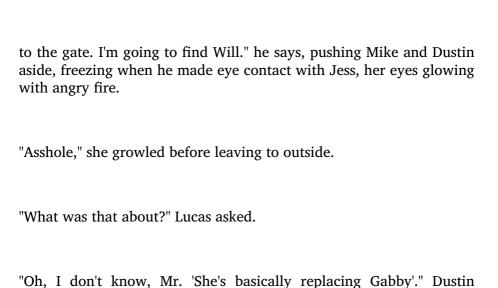












mocks, walking past Lucas with Mike following behind him.

Lucas furrowed his eyebrows before he realized what he meant.

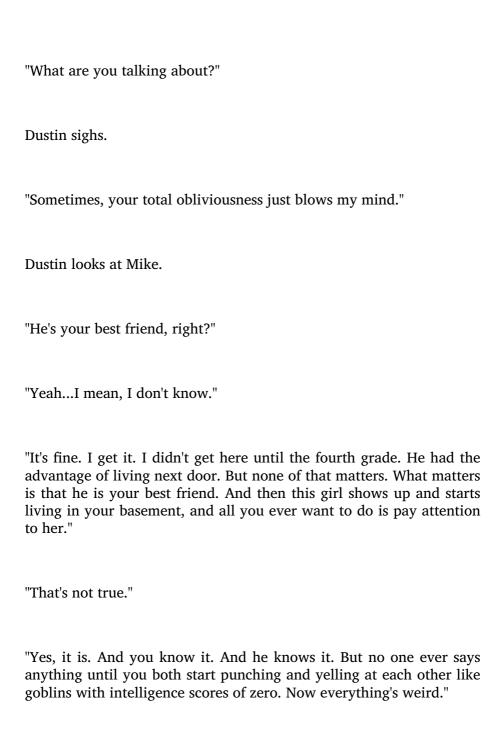
"Oh shit...that was an asshole thing to say." he groaned, hitting his forehead.

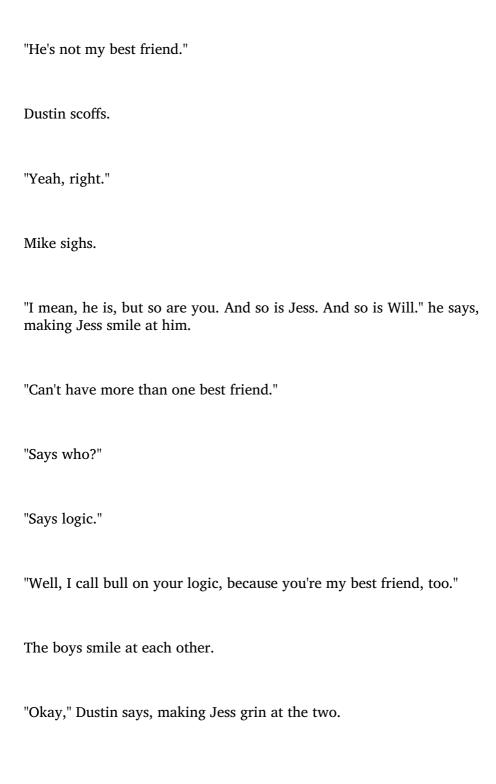
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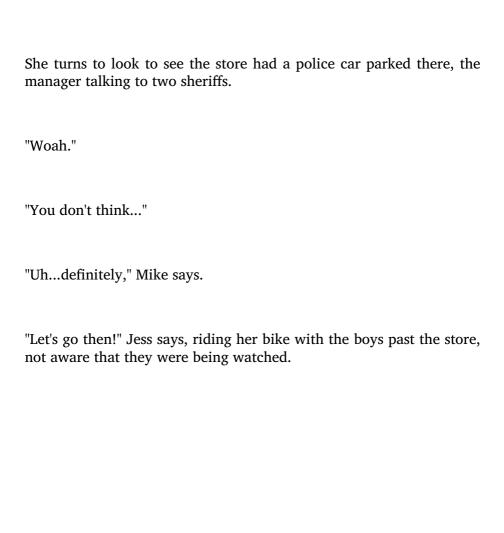
"This is weird without Lucas," Dustin admitted, as the three of them rode down the neighborhood to search for Eleven.

"He should have shaken my hand, AND apologized to Jess," Mike says, Jess, looking to Mike before looking back to the road.

"He's just jealous," Dustin says.







17. Chapter 17

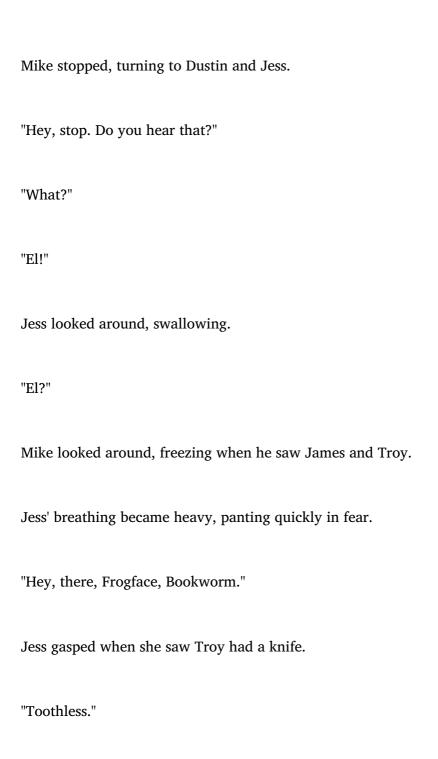
Summary for the Chapter:

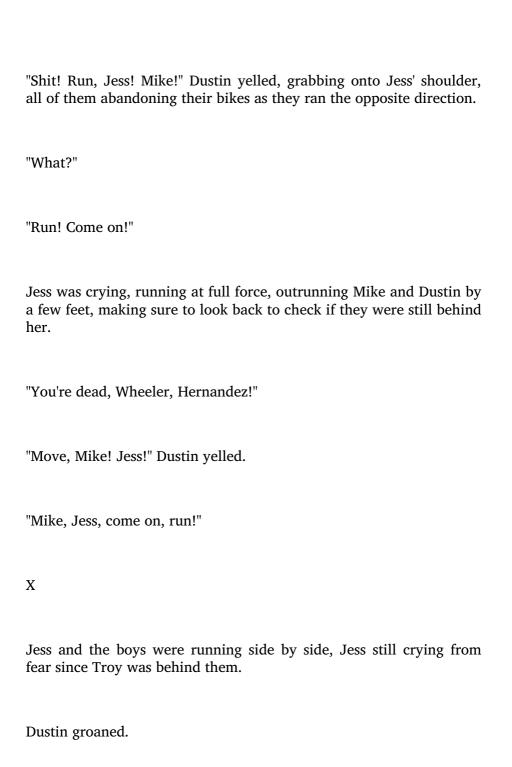
"Eleven!"

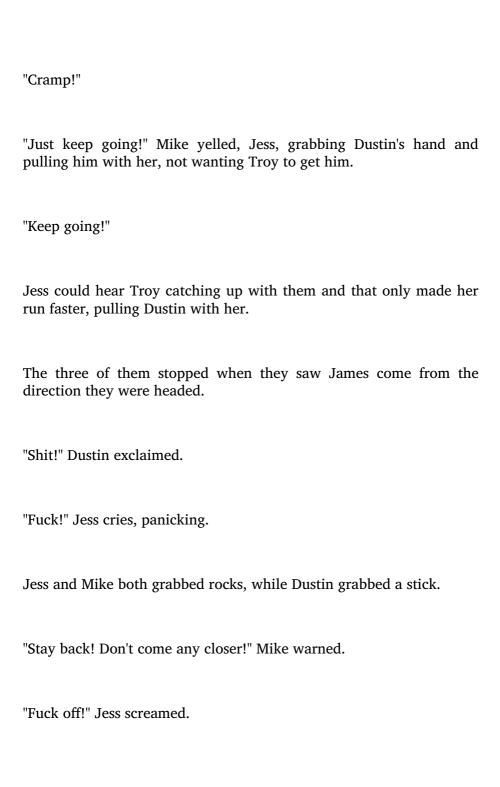
El saves Jess and Mike from a possible death and learns of Jess' dead sister 'Gabby'.

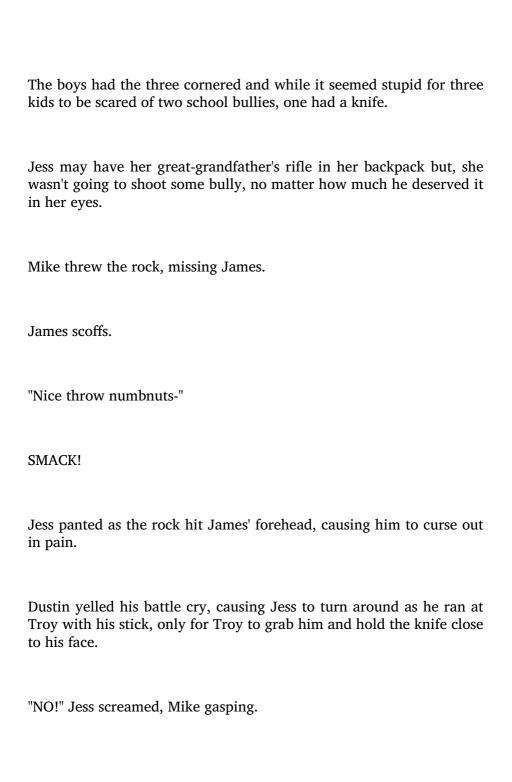
El was sitting in the forest, eating the Eggos she stole from the store when she heard Dustin yelling out for her from a distance.

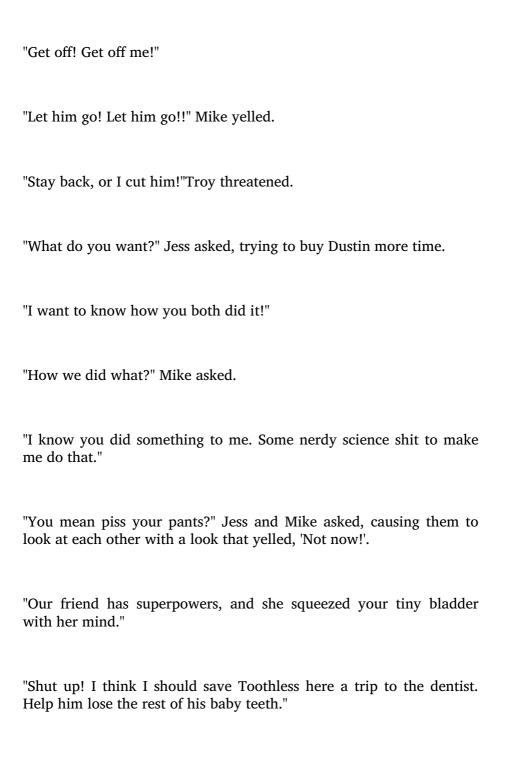
Then it was followed by Mike calling out to her as well, making her chewing slow.
She stopped when she heard Jess call out to her as well, calling her-
"¡Once!"
"Eleven! El!"
"El!
"Eleven!"
"¡Once!"

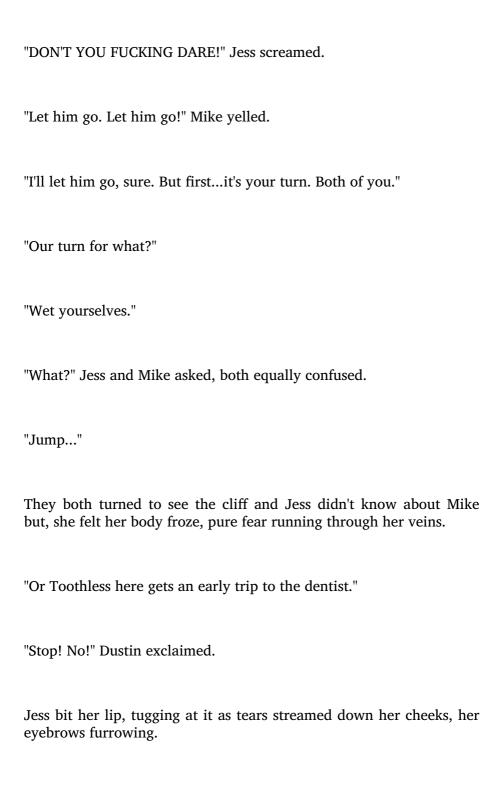


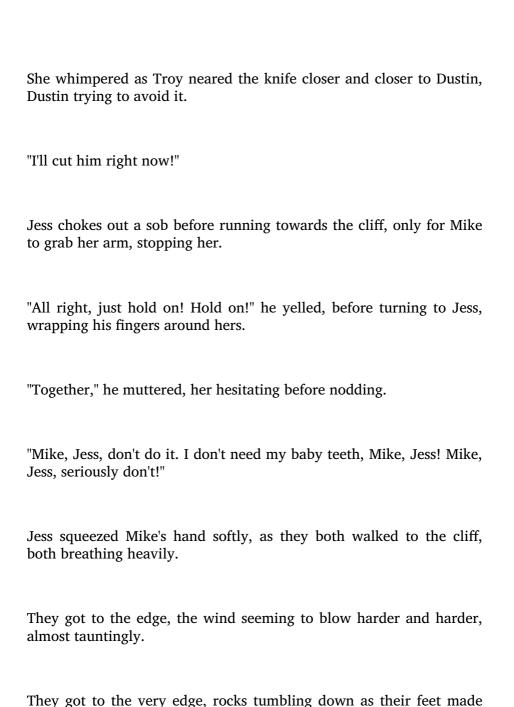




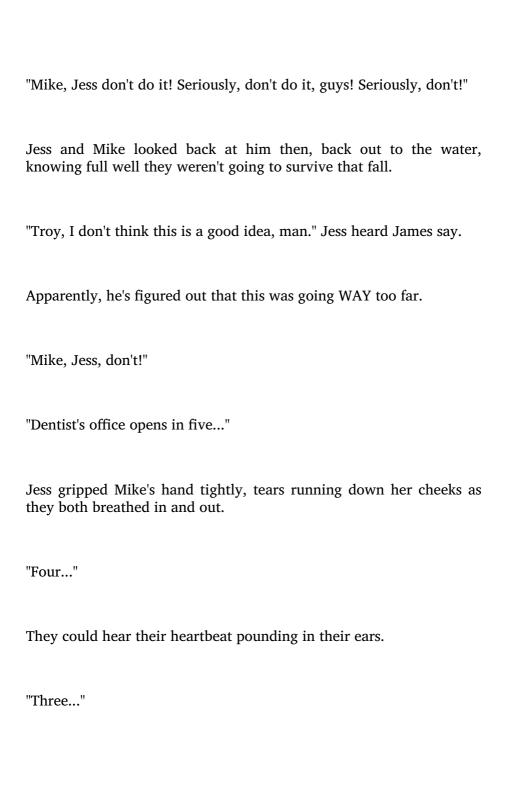


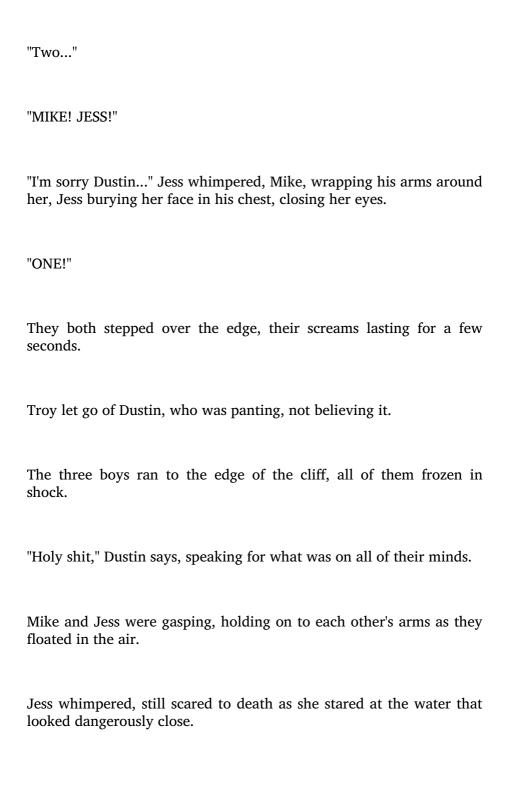


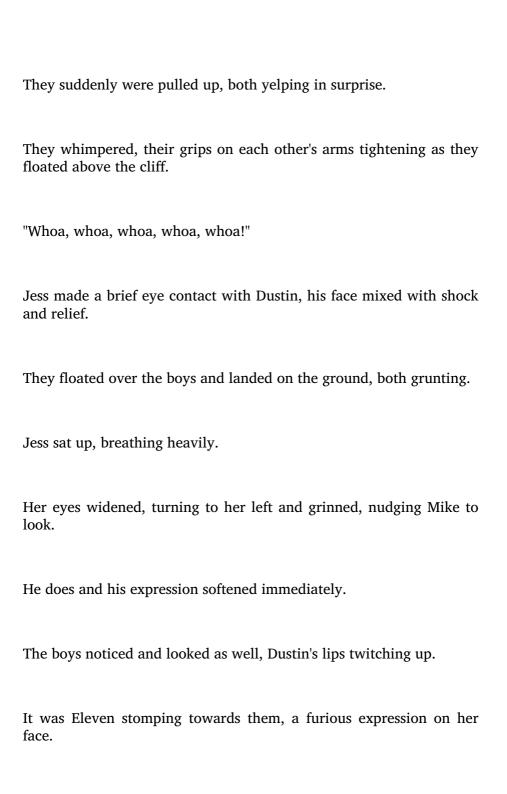




contact with them.



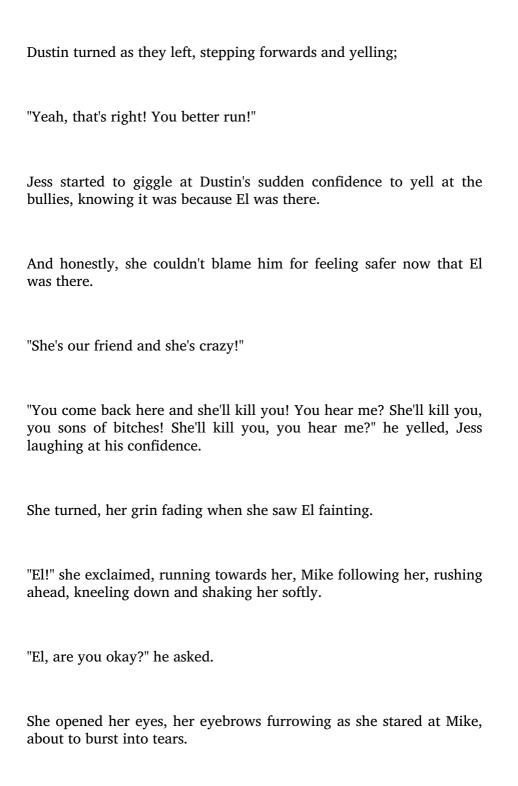


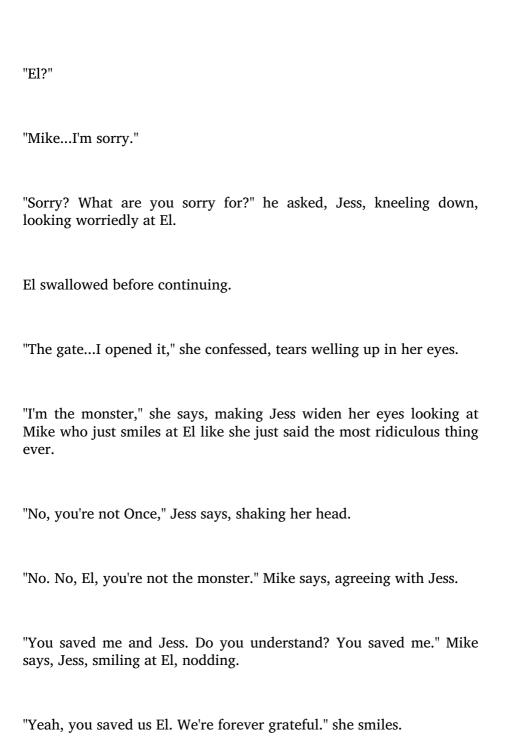


Jess never looked so grateful and relieved in her life as she grinned at El, Mike simply staring at her in awestruck.
Dustin grinned at his friend, knowing shit was about to go down because, if he learned ANYTHING about El these past few days was one, simple thing; ANYONE WHO MESSES WITH MIKE AND JESS HAS TO GO THROUGH HER.
She glared at the bullies, pushing James down onto the ground harshly with her mind.
Jess grinned wider, loving this badass side of El.
She tilted her head, a bone crack being heard as Troy dropped his knife, screaming in pain.
"She broke my arm! My arm!"
"Go," El demanded, clenching her fists angerly.

"Let's get out of here! Let's go!"

"Go!"





El sighs, about to burst into tears as Mike pulled her up, hugging her softly.

Jess smiled as Dustin kneeled down next to her, both of them wrapping their arms around Mike and El.

They hugged them both, their heads plopping softly on top of their heads.

El noticed how each of their hugs felt something different, yet in some ways similar.

They all felt thankful, relieved, and happy.

They also felt the main three things Jess mentioned; the feeling of being safe, loved, and cared for.

Yet, Dustin's and Jess' hug felt sibling-like, like how a friend would hug.

Like how Dustin patted her arm reassuringly, and Jess rubbed her back.

Mike's hug, however, felt more.

As if, he was meant to be more than just a friend.

Like how he gripped onto the jacket she was wearing felt loving and made her stomach have butterflies.

But now, as she turned her head to look at Jess, she smiled at her a knowing smile and Jess grinned back.

She now understood what Jess meant by how there were different ways on how people hugged.

X

As Jess was walking through the woods with El by her side, she was holding onto a picture of what Jess had said, was her little sister.

Jess explained the reason she didn't tell her at first was because then, they just had met and she didn't really like to talk about her past with strangers when it was unnecessary.

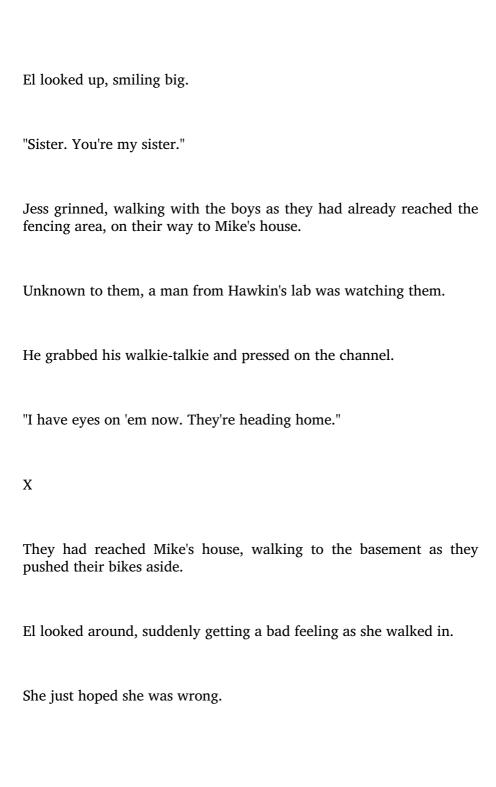
El understood and let Jess talk about 'Gabby', noticing how her eyes would light up when she mentioned a funny memory about her.

"What happened to Gabby?" El asked.

Jess frowned, looking down. "She...was hit by a car. We were crossing the streets on our bikes. I had already crossed and when I turned to look at her, she was pedaling towards me, and I told her to look both ways to see if a car was going to pass but, of course, typical little sister, she didn't listen." El frowned, not liking how sad Jess' voice sounded. "So...she got hit. And we rushed her to the hospital but by the time we got there she was..." Jess choked, covering her mouth. "Gone?" El whispered, making Jess nod. "Yeah...gone." El hugged her, rubbing her back, remembering how comforting it felt when Jess did it to her. "So, when Lucas said I was basically replacing her, it wasn't true.

Gabby is Gabby and you are you. No one can replace her, even if they tried, okay? You both have special places in my heart. You're my

sister El."



18. Chapter 18

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess is furious when the vans start chasing them, trying to take away her best friend from her, that she doesn't notice when a particular red liquid runs down her nose.

Jess was with Dustin as Mike was with El in the bathroom, helping her wash up.

"You scared me half to death back there," Dustin says, looking at her.

She smiles at him, shrugging.

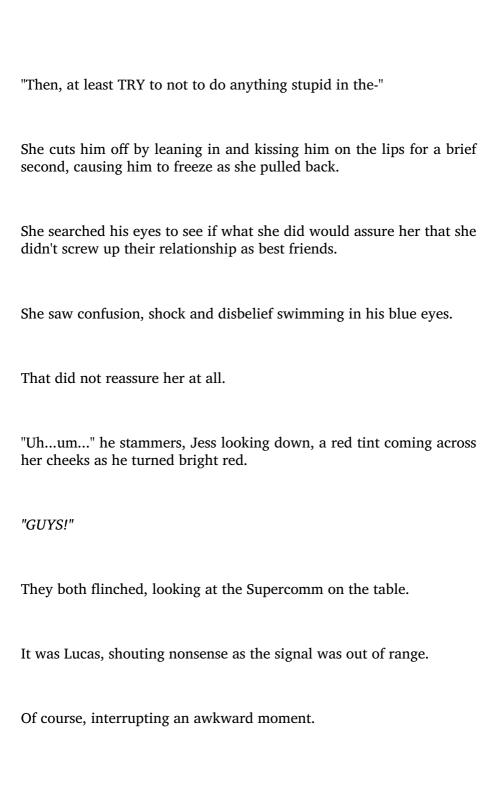
"Well, I couldn't let them cut you, Dustin, that was the only solution at the time. Thank god for El to show up at the right time," she says, chuckling.

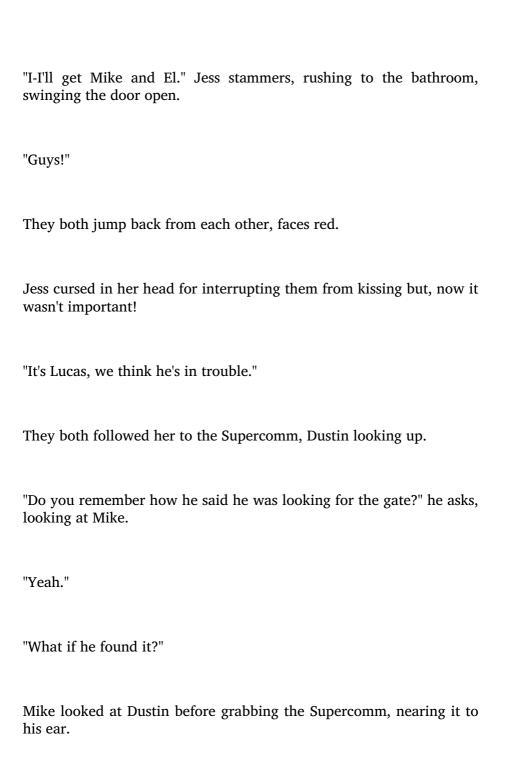
She looked at him, their eyes meeting.

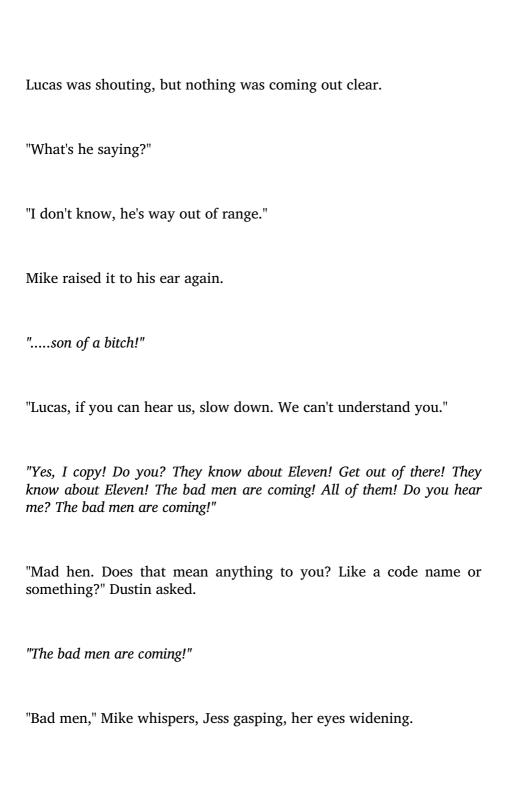
"I won't let anything hurt you, Dustin, I swear it," she whispered.

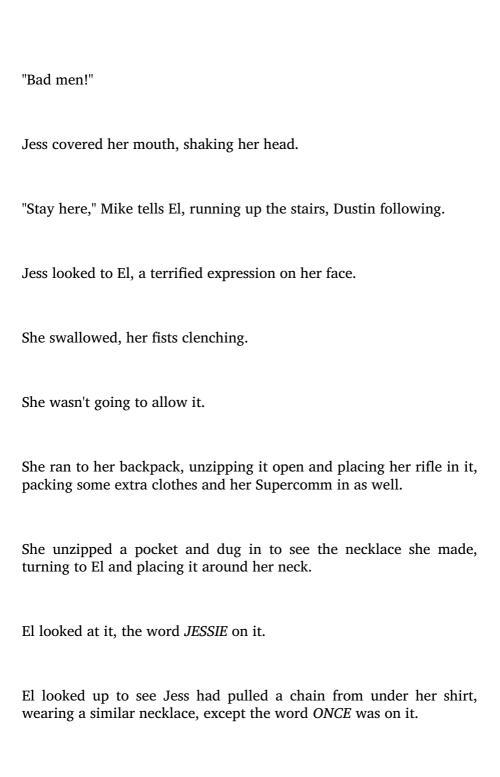
"Then, promise me you won't do anything stupid in the process," he says, causing her to chuckle.

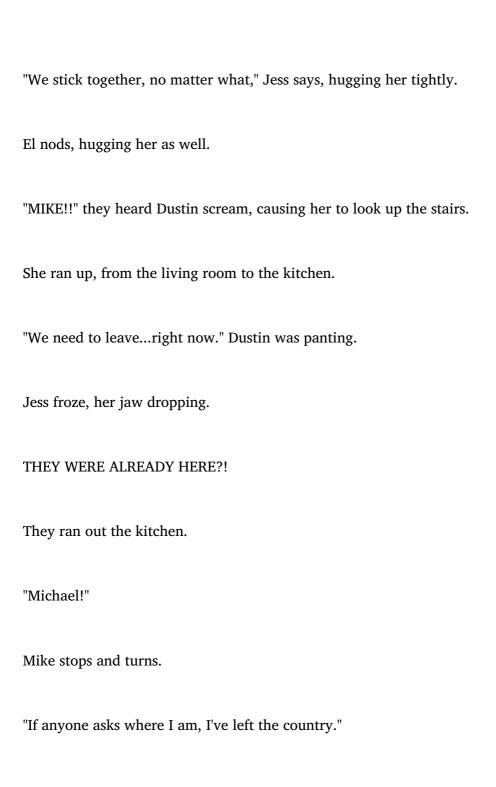
"I can't promise that," she states.

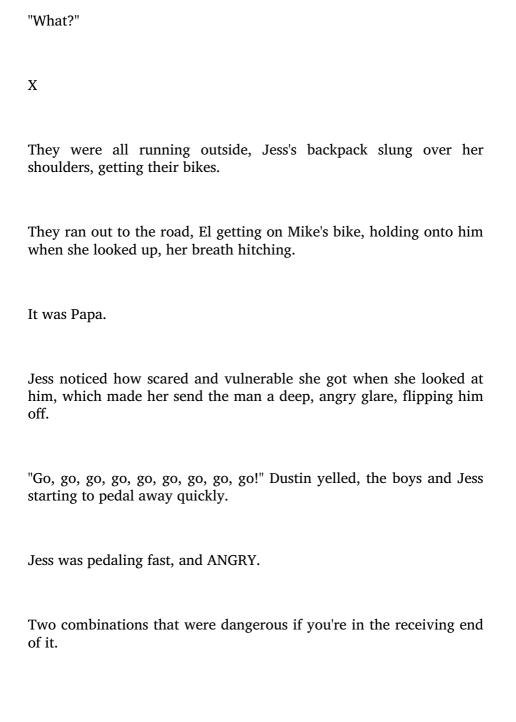


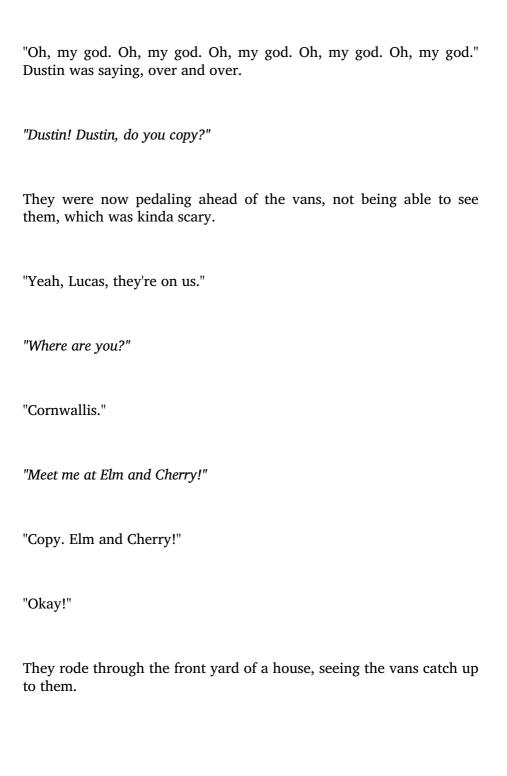


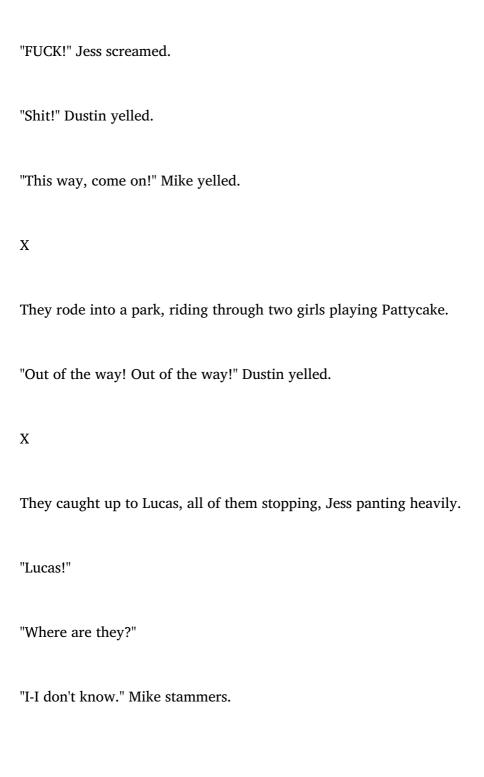


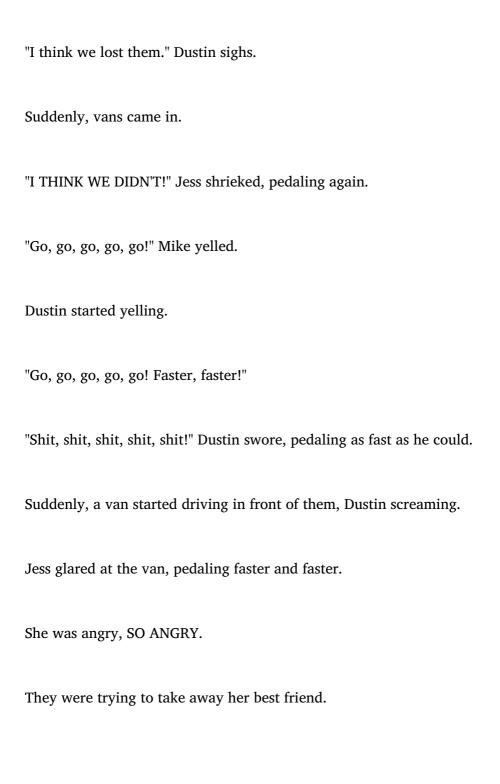












Her sister.

She was so focused on the van that she didn't notice how El was also concentrating on the van the same way she did, focusing on her powers.

What she did notice was how the van flew upward, causing her to snap out of her concentration, staring at it in awe before it crashed behind them, blocking the vans from following them from behind.

They all looked at each other, Jess bursting out in laughter as they pedaled on, El gripping onto Mike tighter as she felt weak from using too much of her power.

What Jess didn't notice was how a trickle of blood ran down her nose as they pedaled away.

X

Mr. Brenner walked out of the van, smirking on how the two girls, whether they knew it or not, used teamwork to flip the van and send it flying into the air.

Which was why he was so interested in teaming the two up 9 years ago.

19. Chapter 19

Summary for the Chapter:

After reconciling with Lucas, he tells The Party about the lab. Unfortunately, the Bad Men are looking for them.

They were in the junkyard, where the fight happened.

Jess got out of her bike, running Mike and El, helping Mike get El off his bike.

El looked up and widened her eyes.

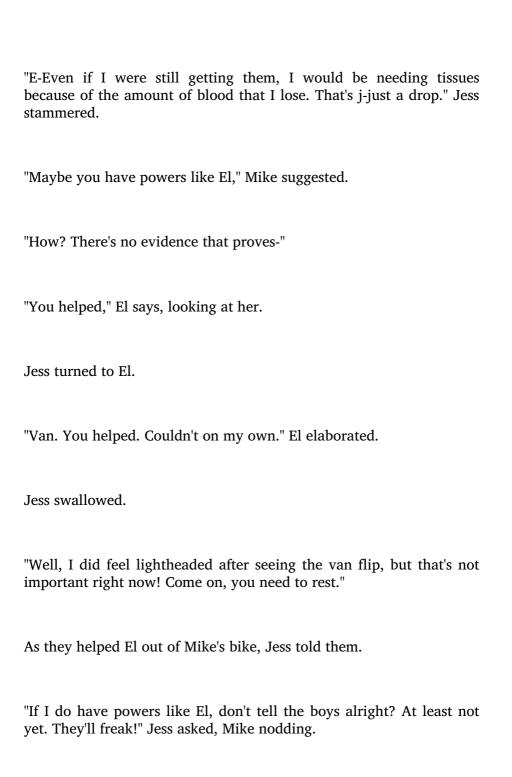
"Blood..." she whispered, pointing at her face.

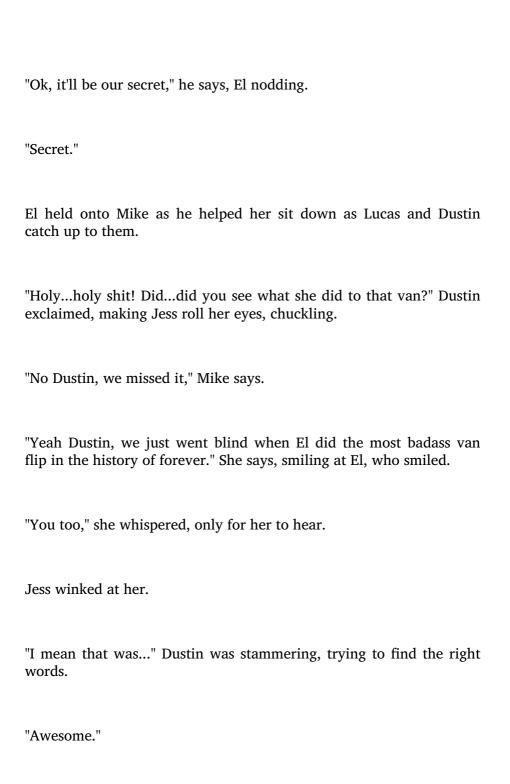
Jess furrowed her eyebrows, Mike looking up at Jess to see what she was talking about and froze, widening his eyes.

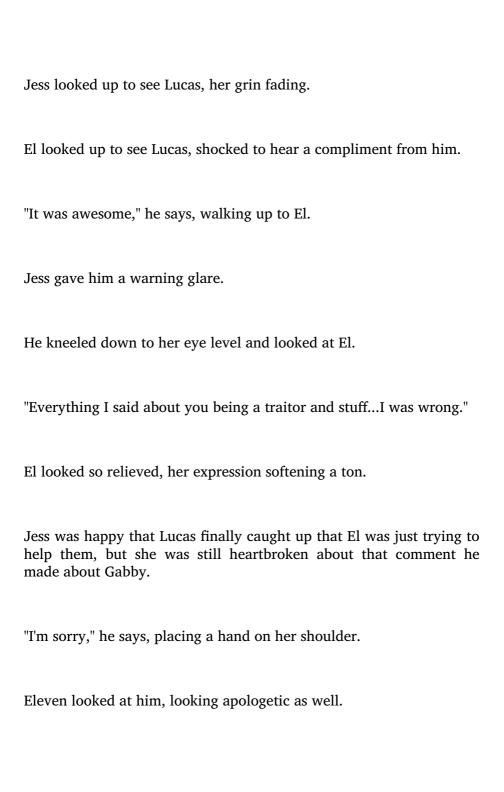
"Jess, have you been getting the yearly nosebleeds lately?" he asked.

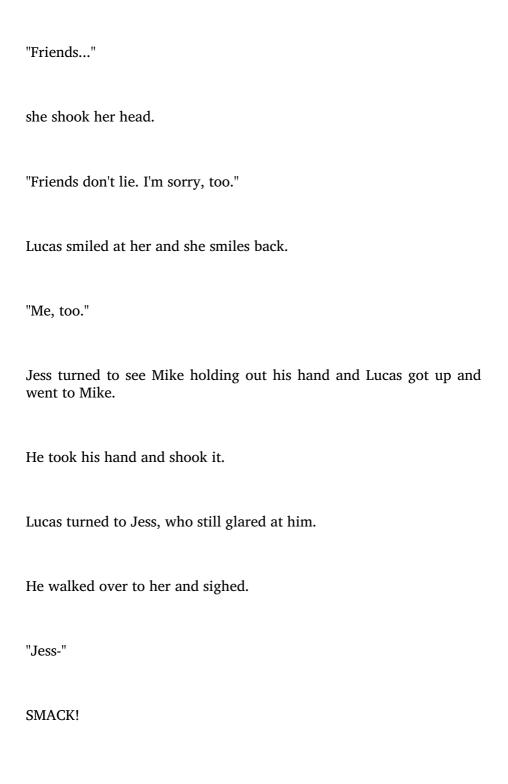
"Uh, no. I haven't been getting them since the year I had amnesia. Why?"

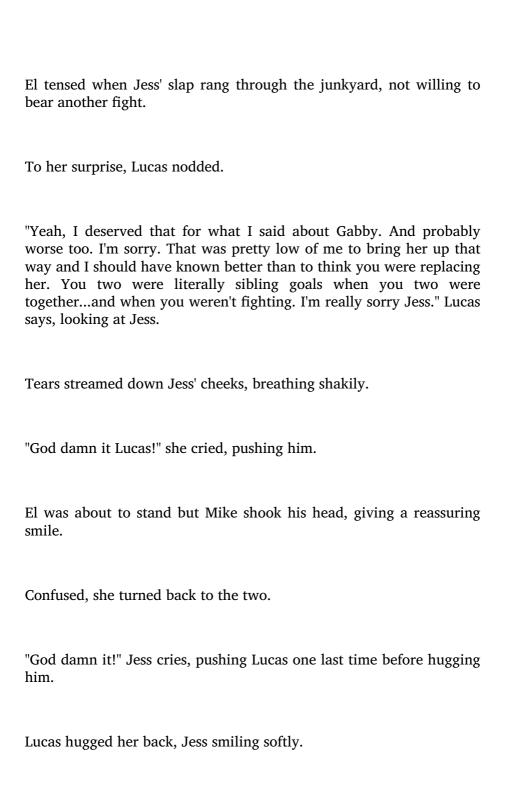
El wiped Jess's upper lip, Jess widening when blood was revealed on her hand.

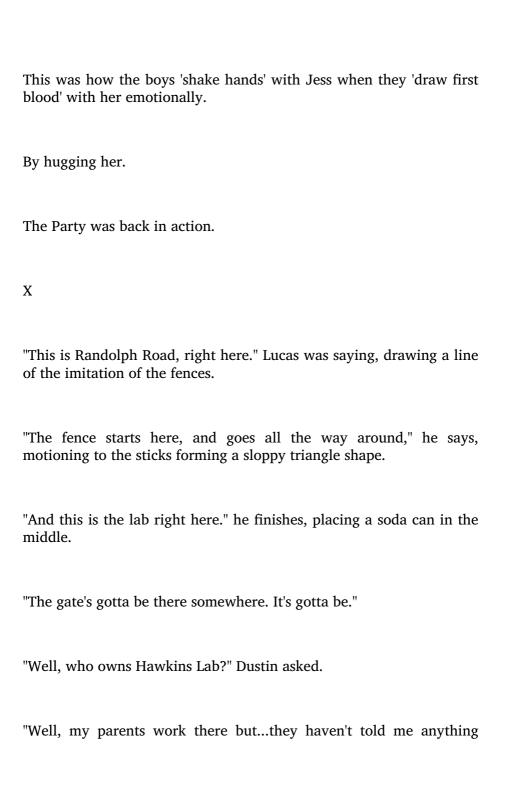


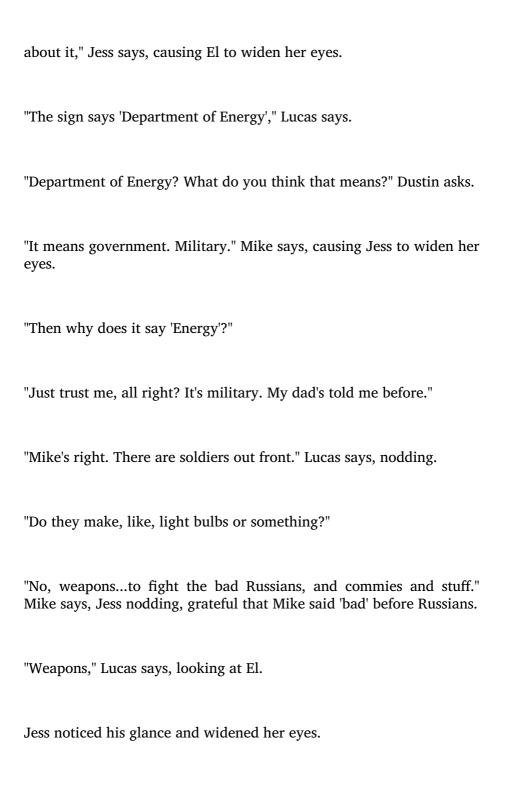


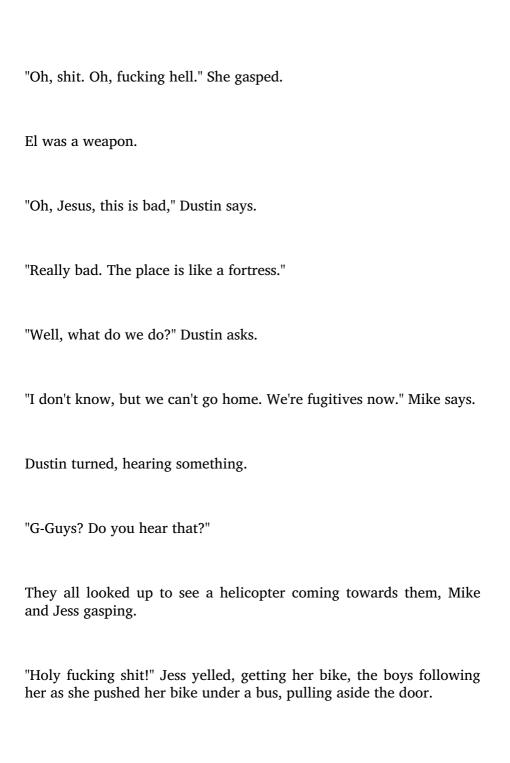


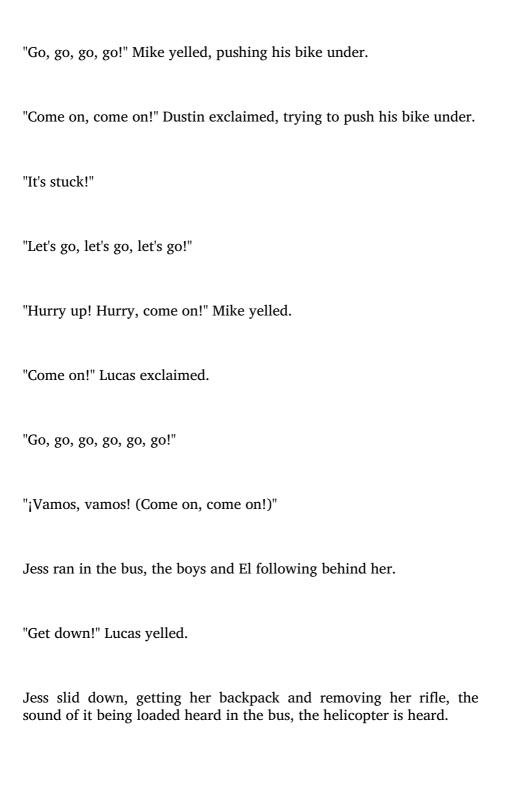


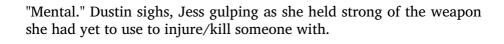












Shit just got real.

20. Chapter 20

Summary for the Chapter:

Hopper rescues the kids before anything bad happens, taking them back to the Byers house.

"Hey, you okay?" Jess whispered to El.

El trembled, looking up.

Mike looked at Jess, the gun she had left alone, thankfully the safety on.

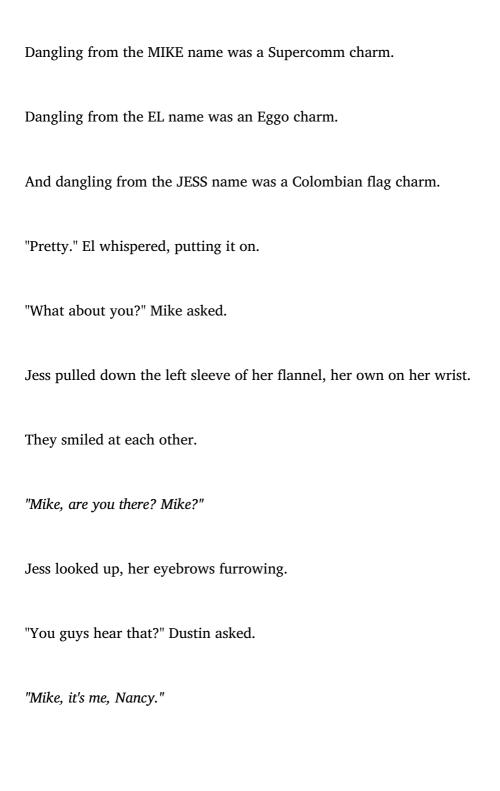
"Yeah, I'm scared too." Jess whispered.

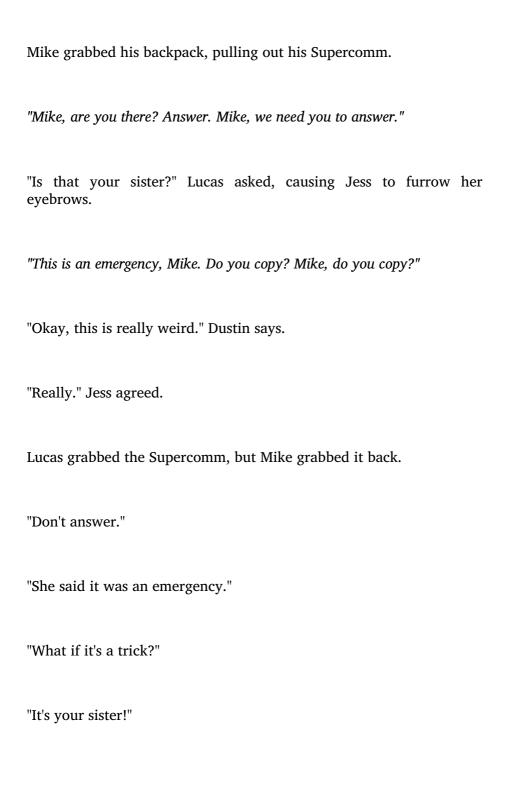
She looked at the two and grabbed her backpack, unzipping it and digging into the backpack until she found two blue in and out loop bracelets, charms dangling from them.

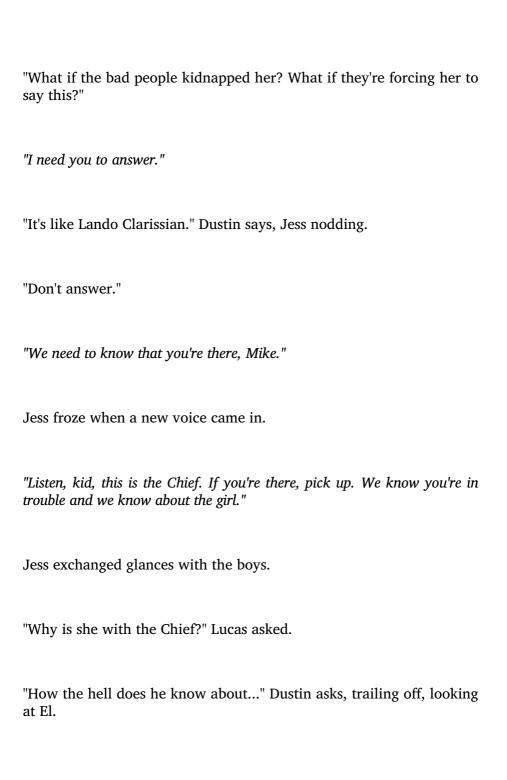
"Here, I made them for both of you." she whispered.

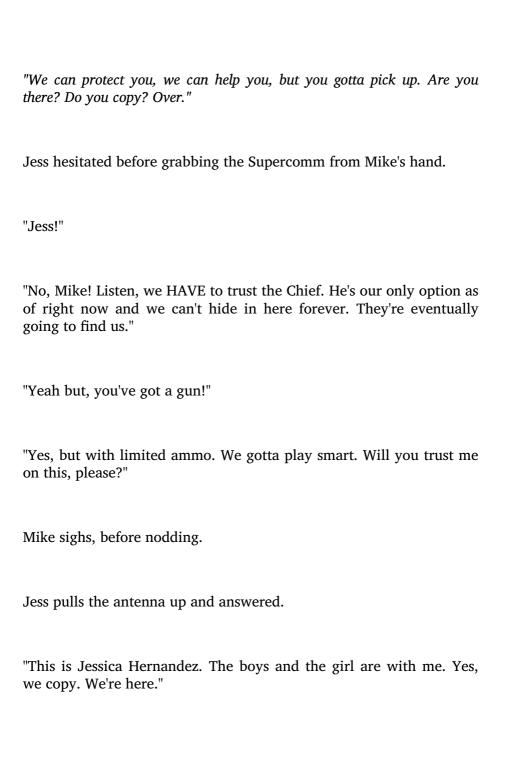
Mike took his, smiling at the charms.

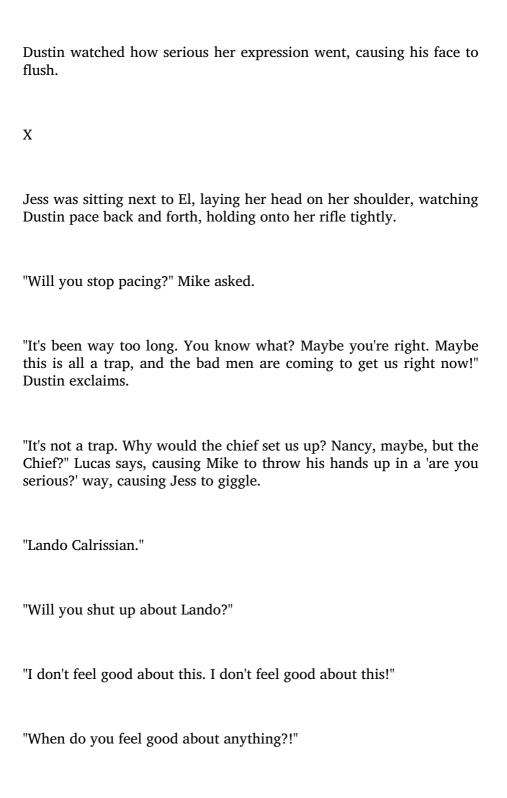
It was all their nicknames with a little charm that represents them.

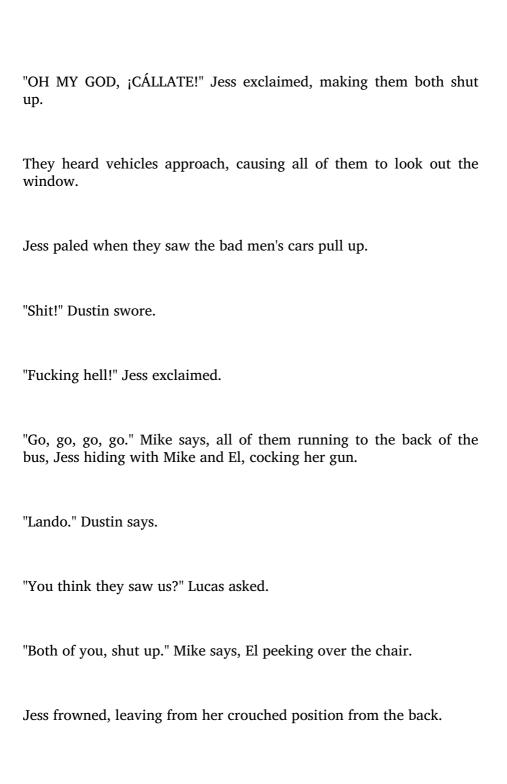


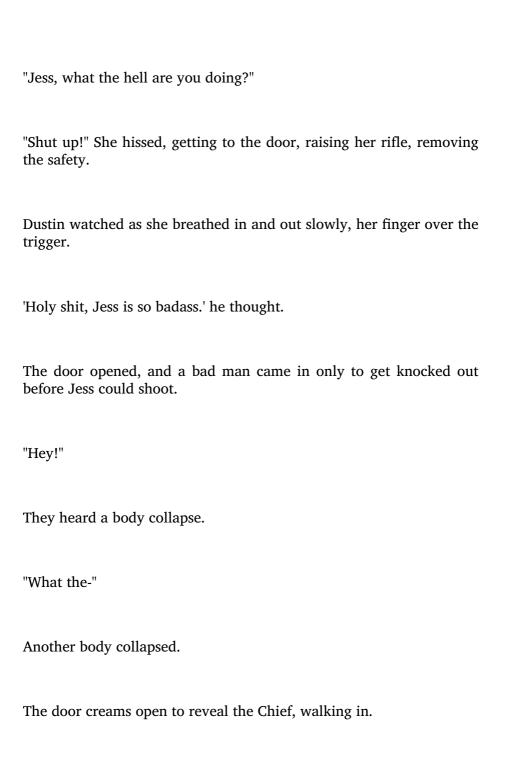


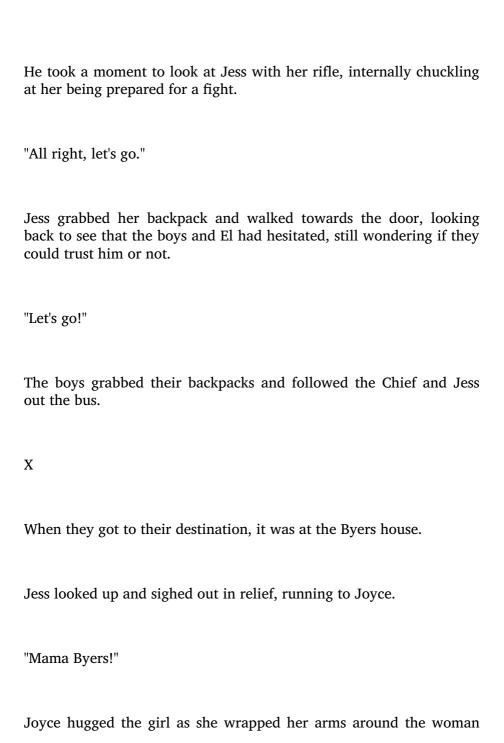


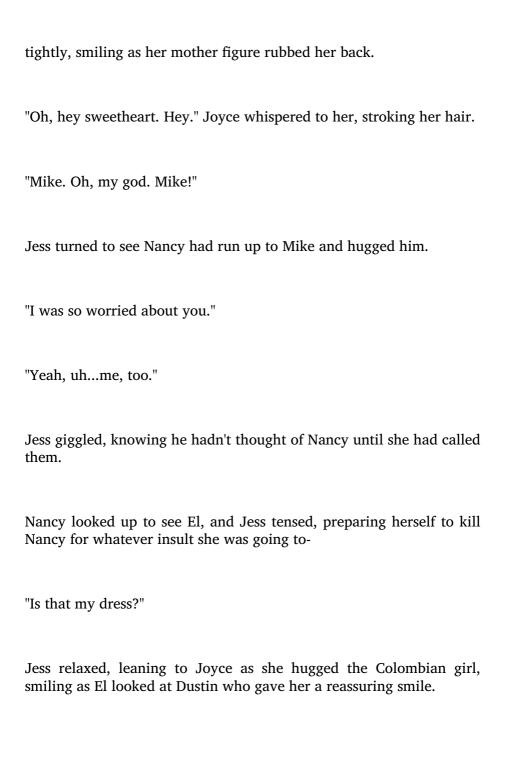


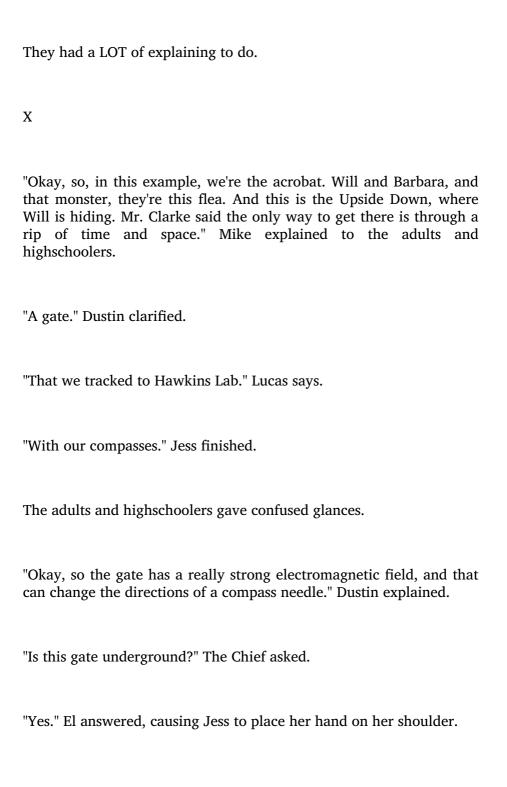


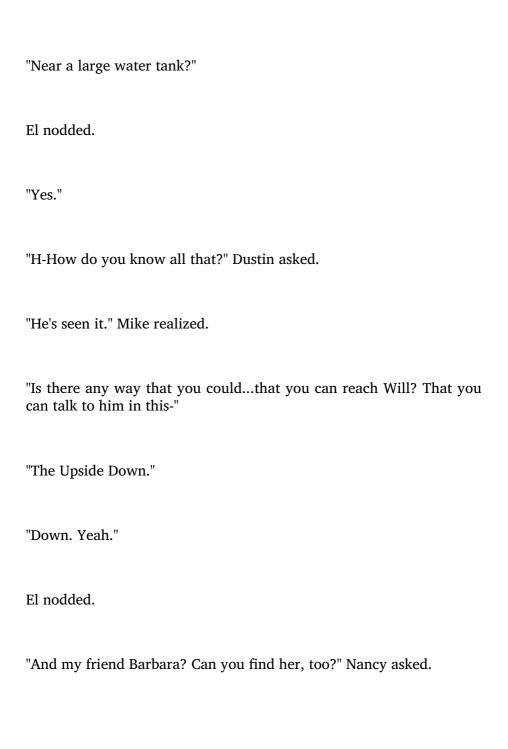












El looked at her, grabbing ahold of Jess' hand and squeezing it gently.
She could.
And she will.

21. Chapter 21

Summary for the Chapter:

After a getting a flashback from her past that included El, Jess realizes that they needed a Sensory Deprivation Tank to help El communicate with Barb and Will.

The static of the Supercomm is all that's being heard as El tried to find Will and Barbara.

Jess stood between Mike and Dustin, watching El twitch her closed eyes, the lights flickering on and off.

El opened her eyes, the lights staying on.

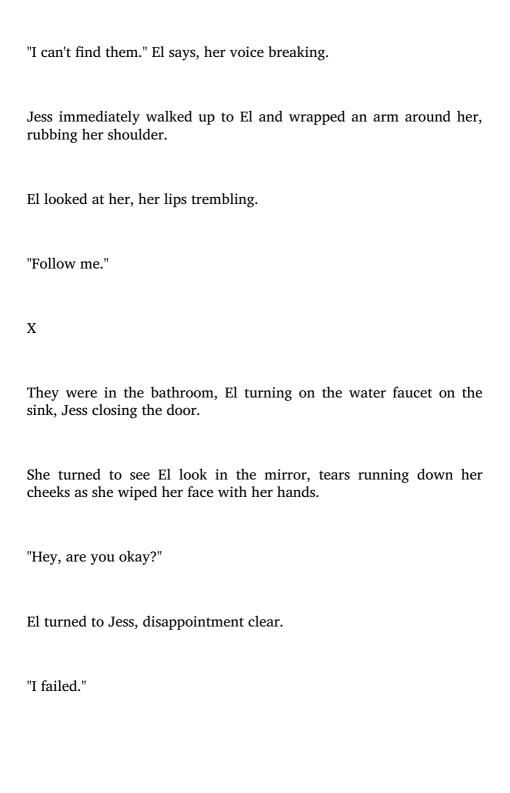
Jess widened her eyes as El's face became sad, defeated almost.

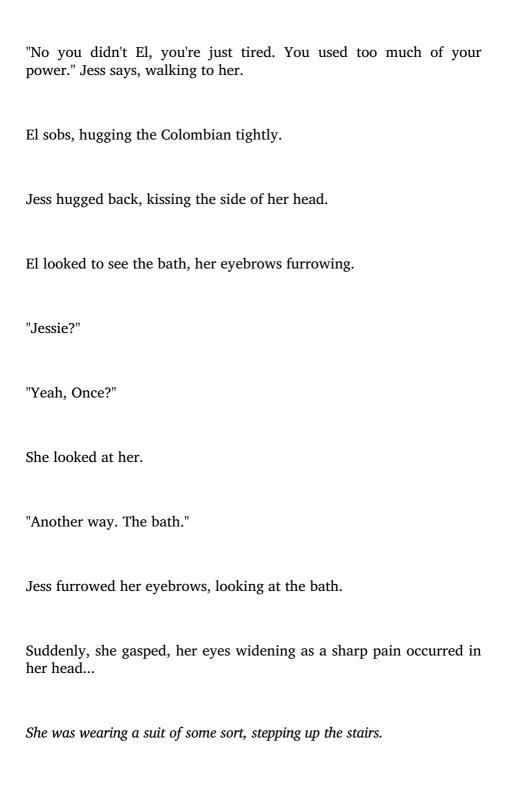
";Once?"

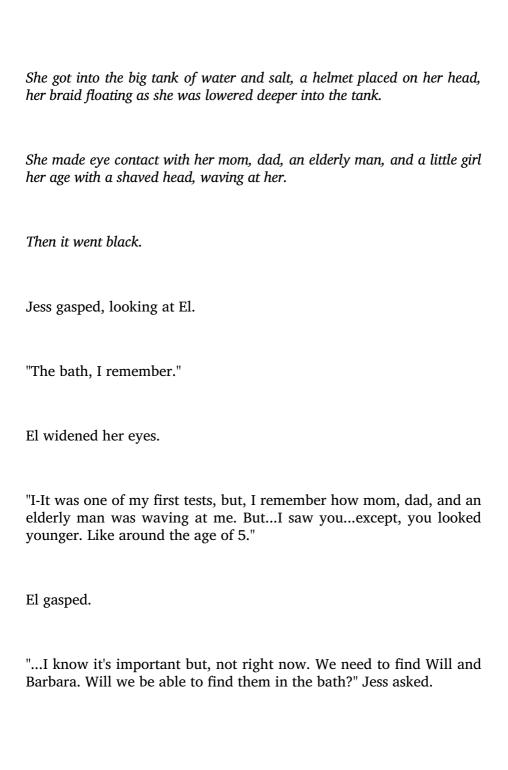
She looked up, her eyebrows furrowing in sadness.

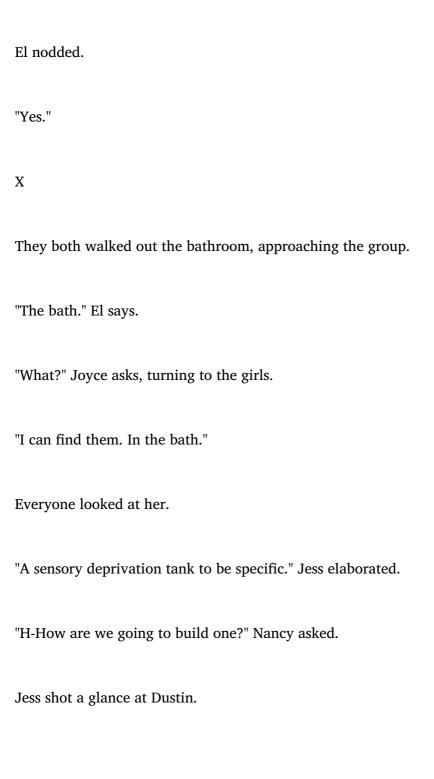
"I'm sorry."

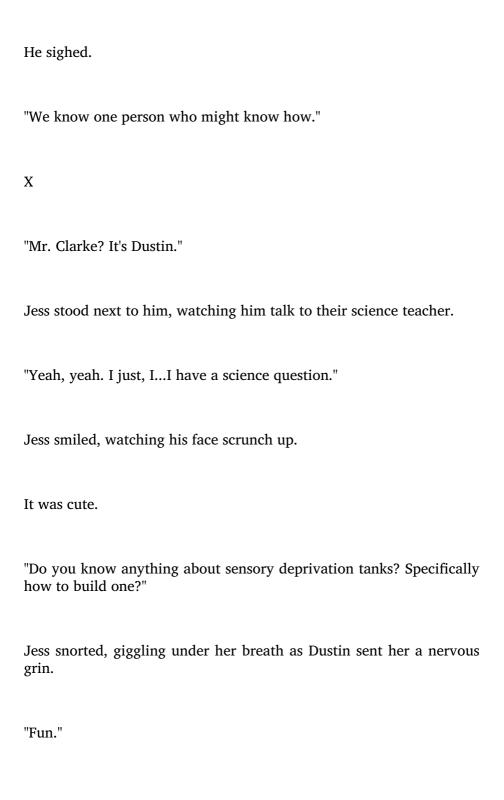
"What? What's wrong? What happened?" Joyce asked.

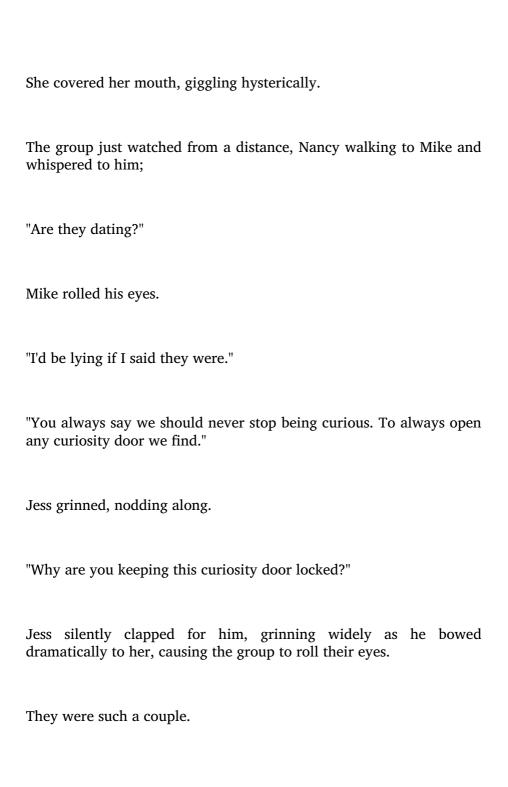


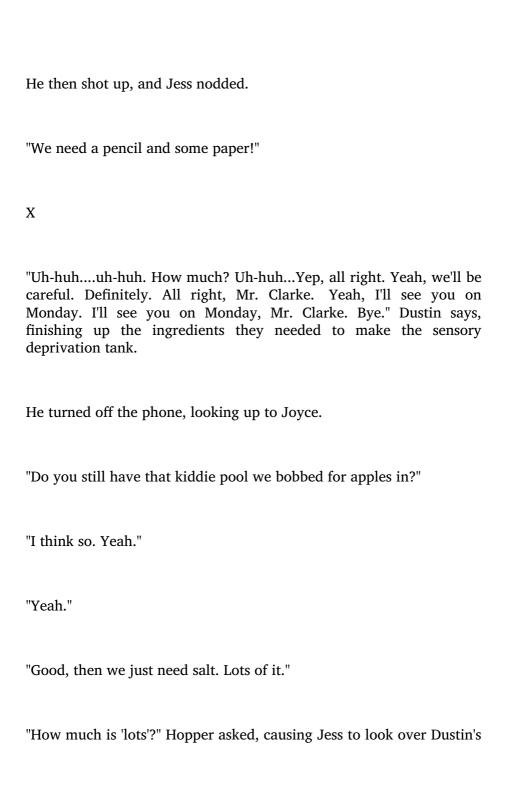


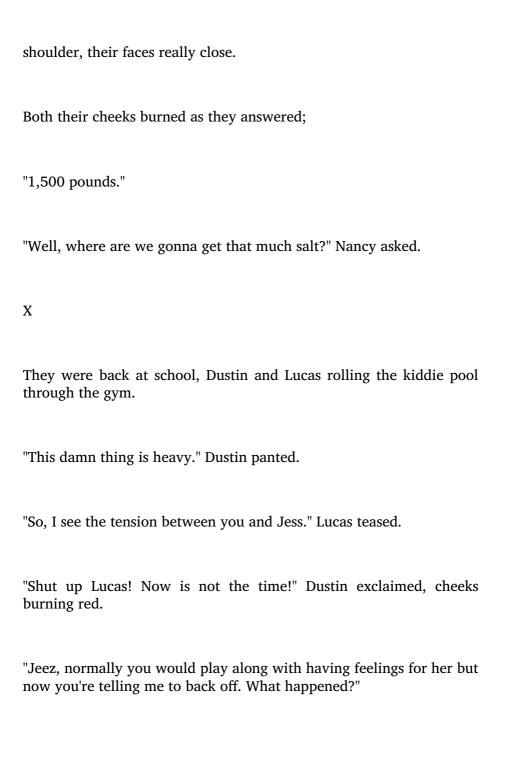


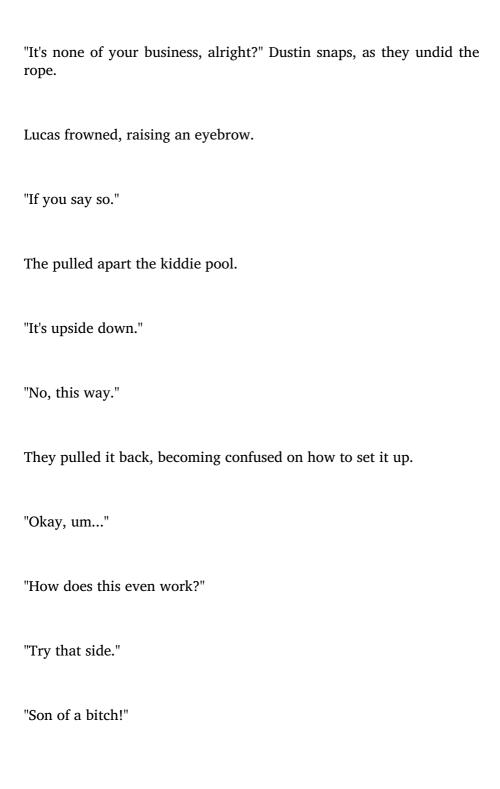


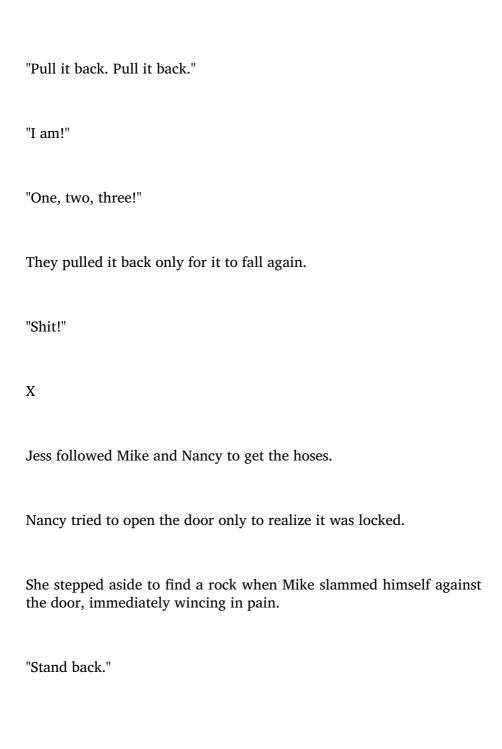


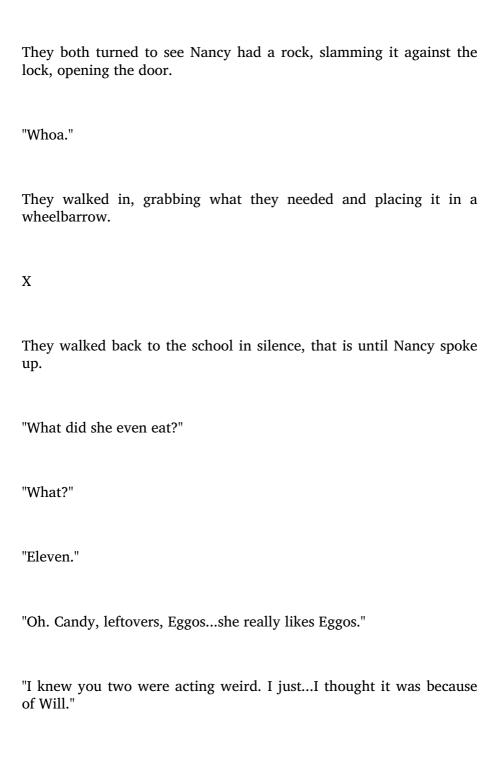


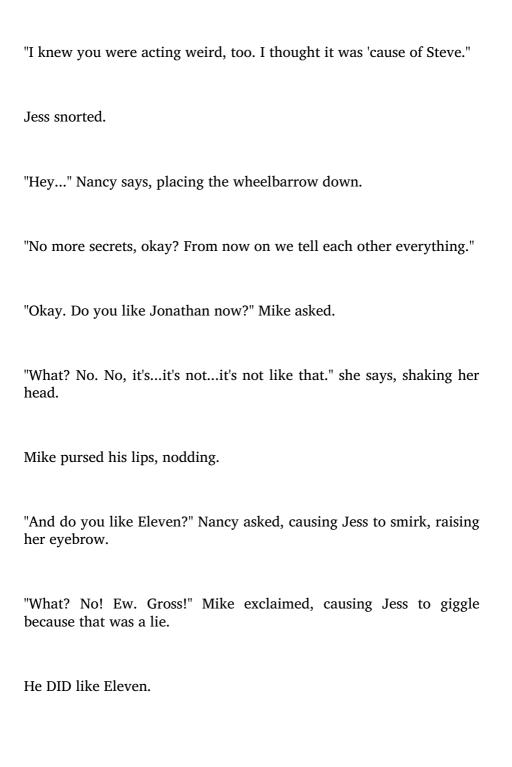












Just like how she liked Dustin.

22. Chapter 22

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess comforts El as she finds Will, and goes to talk to Nancy about her grieving for Barb.

Jess sat between Mike and Dustin and Lucas checked the temperature of the water.

"COLDER!!" Lucas checked after a second and yelled; "WARMER!!" He checked again and yelled; "Right there!" X After Jonathan and Hopper poured the salt in, Dustin grabbed an egg and plopped it in the water, only for it to sink.

"WE NEED MORE SALT!!" Jess yelled.



After Jonathan and Hopper poured more salt in, Dustin plopped the egg on the water, Jess placing a hand on his shoulder as he bit his lip, sighing in relief when it floated.

"We got it!!" Jess called.

X

Mike placed his Supercomm down turning up the static.

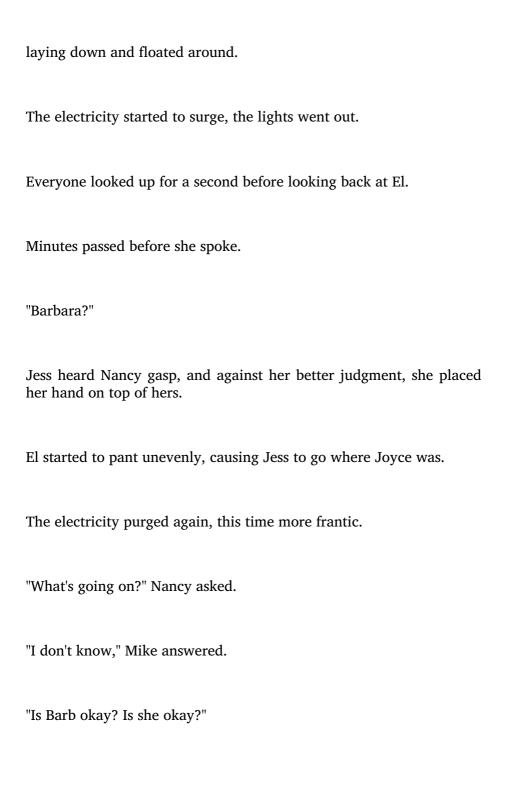
X

El was rolling down her socks, taking them off and setting them aside, taking off the watch Mike gave her and handed it back to him.

She hesitated before grabbing the goggles that were covered with duck tape, putting it on.

X

Jess held onto Mike's hand as they watched El get on the kiddie pool,



"Gone. Gone." Eleven says, getting louder every time she said it.

Nancy gasped, placing her hand over her mouth.

"It's okay. It's okay." Joyce was saying to El, who was now screaming the word.

Jess got into the bath, much to everyone's surprise and held onto El's head.

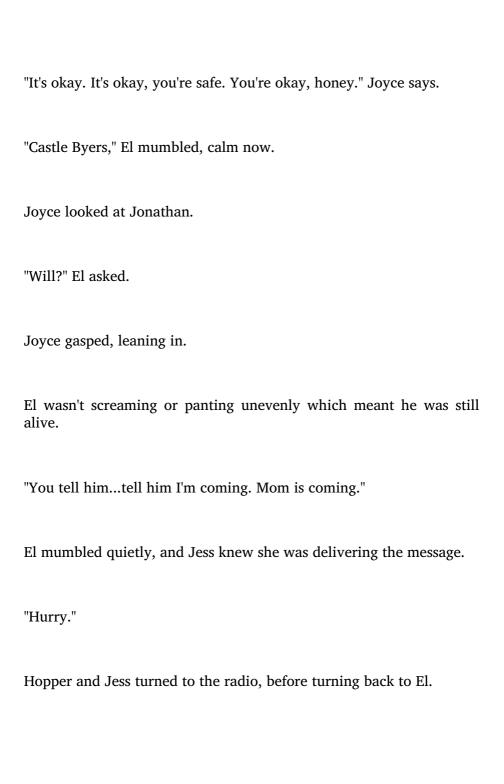
"You're okay, you're safe. No one's here to hurt you, alright? You're safe, I'm here." Jess whispered, stroking her head as El gasped.

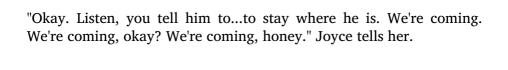
"It's okay, we're right here. We're right here, honey." Joyce says, holding onto El's hand.

The boys exchanged knowing glances as Jess whispered reassuring words to El, the last time she reassured someone like this was when her sister had a nightmare in one of their sleepovers.

"It's okay, we got you. Don't be afraid. We're right here with you. We're right here with you." Joyce says, holding onto her arm.

"It's okay. It's okay." Jess says, kissing El's forehead.





El mumbled, Jess hearing 'Will' across the mumbles.

Suddenly, whimpering is heard on the radio and Jess immediately took the goggles off, causing El to shot up, causing everyone except her to exclaim in shock.

Jess pulled El close to her as she whimpered, hugging her from behind.

Joyce wrapped her arms around the two girls, El holding onto Joyce's arm while pressing her back closer to Jess.

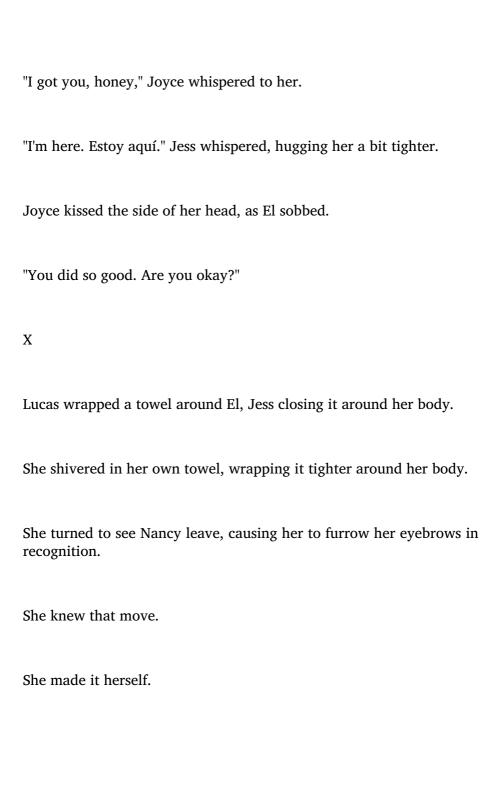
"Oh! Oh, god. Okay, okay." Joyce says, pulling the girls a bit closer.

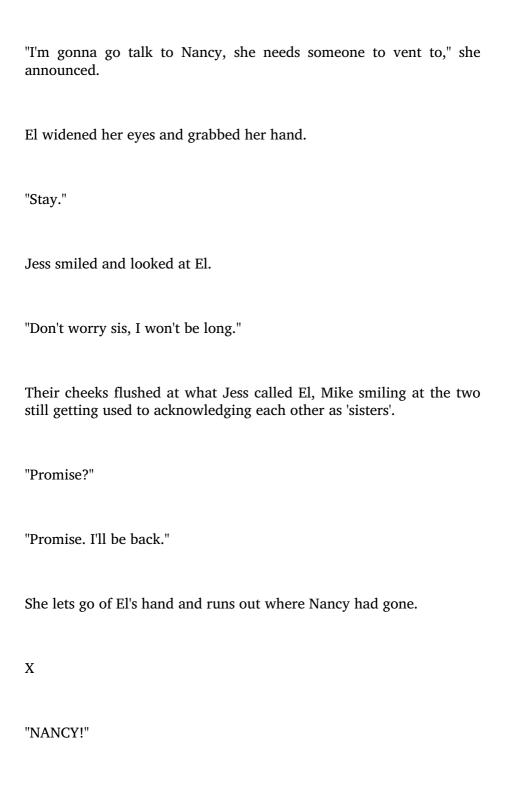
"I've got you, I've got you," Jess whispered.

El breathed heavily, tears starting to form.

"It's okay. I got you. I got you." Jess whispered, kissing El's head.

El cried as she held onto Joyce's arm and being hugged by her sister as they murmured reassuring words.







"Jess, s-sorry, that just came out of my mouth, I wasn't thinking."

Nancy sighed, and without thinking, she spilled.

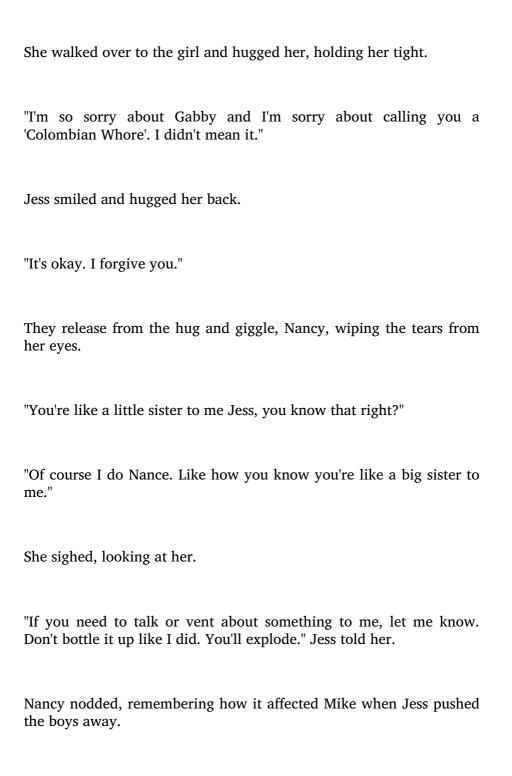
"Its just...what if I went back home with her that night? What if I could've prevented it? She wouldn't be dead! She's dead because of me!" Nancy exclaimed, tears running down.

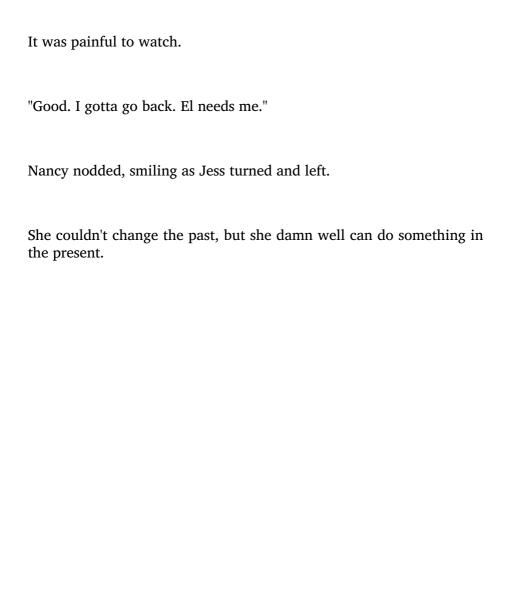
"I get it, Nancy, I do. When Gabby got hit by that car, my world froze. All I could think was how I could've warned her before we crossed the street. How, we could've crossed the street together. How, it should've been ME who got hit by that car and died." Jess says, looking at Nancy in the eyes.

"But you know what? Gabby wouldn't want me to wonder about the 'what-ifs' or to blame myself for her death. She'd want me to live my life to the fullest and do something meaningful with it as long I'm still alive. I stopped wondering about the 'what-ifs' after a year of her death, and I stopped blaming myself a week ago." Jess admitted, causing Nancy to sob, covering her mouth.

"And Barb wouldn't want you to blame yourself either. Maybe you could have done something to change what happened, maybe I could have done something but, that's the funny thing about the past; you can't change what happened." Jess says, shrugging.

Nancy looked at the 12-year-old with a new respect in her eyes.





23. Chapter 23

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess and Dustin talk about their kiss, and Jess and El talk about Snow Ball.

Jess had her head laid on El's shoulder who had her head on Mike's shoulder, their hands gripping onto each other.

Mike was bouncing his leg up and down in impatience, checking his watch and looking out the door.

He got up, causing El to look up and Jess to raise her head, looking when she felt El lay her head on her shoulder, tightening her grip on the girl's hand.

Mike came back, saying;

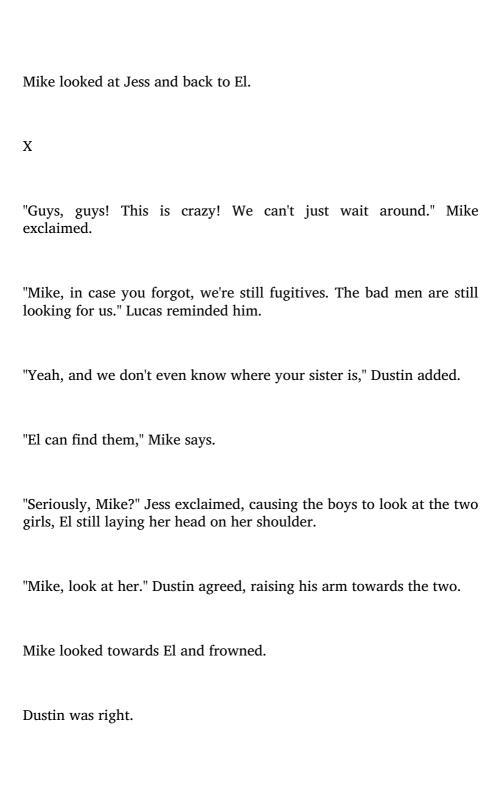
"They're gone."

"What?" Lucas asked.

"Nancy and Jonathan. His car's gone."

"They're probably just sucking face somewhere," Dustin says, causing Jess to pull a disgusted face.





She was still too weak and tired to go looking for anyone right now.

And Jess doesn't know how to control her powers so, that option was a no go.

"I still think we should stick to the chief's plan." Dustin continued.

"Exactly. We stay here, keep El out of sight and keep her safe." Lucas says, looking at him.

"That's the most important thing, remember?" Lucas says, causing Mike to sigh.

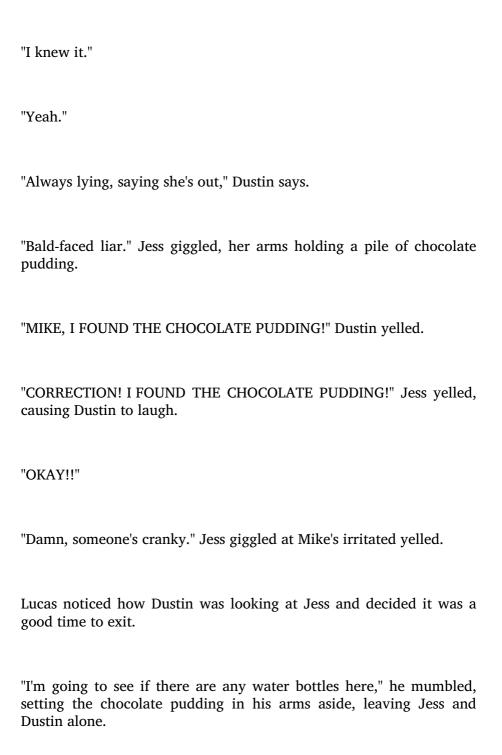
"Besides, she's okay. She's with Jonathan."

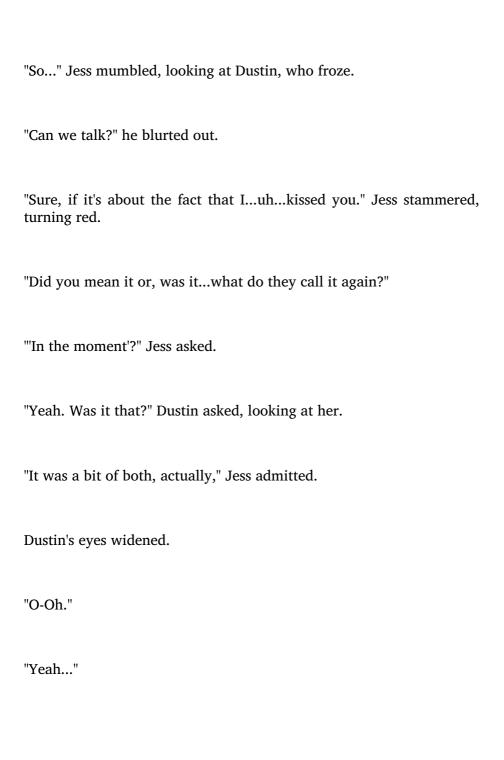
"Yeah, and she's kind of a badass now, so..." Dustin says, walking off.

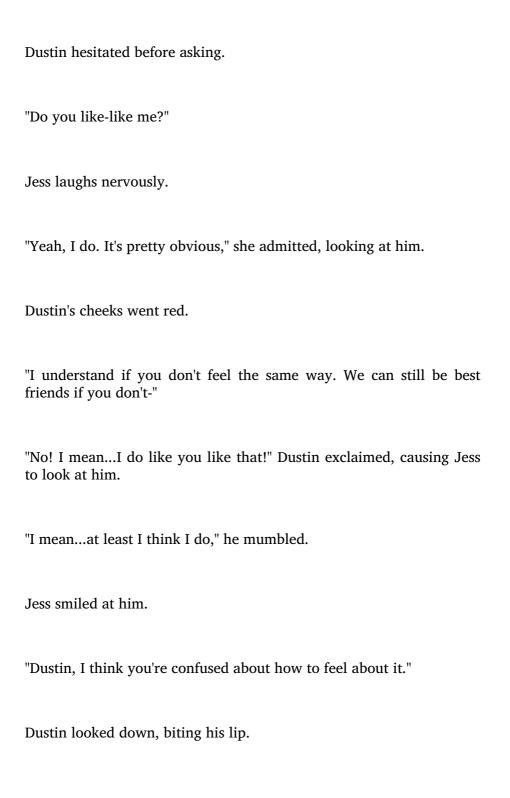
"Well, where are you going? You just said stick to the plan!" Mike exclaimed.

"I am. I'm just gonna go get some chocolate pudding." Dustin says, causing Jess to perk up, El getting the memo and lifting her head from Jess' shoulder, allowing Jess to get up and follow Dustin from behind.









"I don't exactly have an answer for you right now. I don't want to reject you, but, I can't exactly accept your feeling either," he admitted.

"And that's okay! It took me a while for me to realize that I liked you more than a friend." Jess assured him, giving him a small smile.

"Can we, still be best friends? At least until I know what my answer is." Dustin asked, causing Jess to scoff.

"Dustin, we're ALWAYS going to be best friends, regardless if we end up dating or not," she says, causing Dustin to grin.

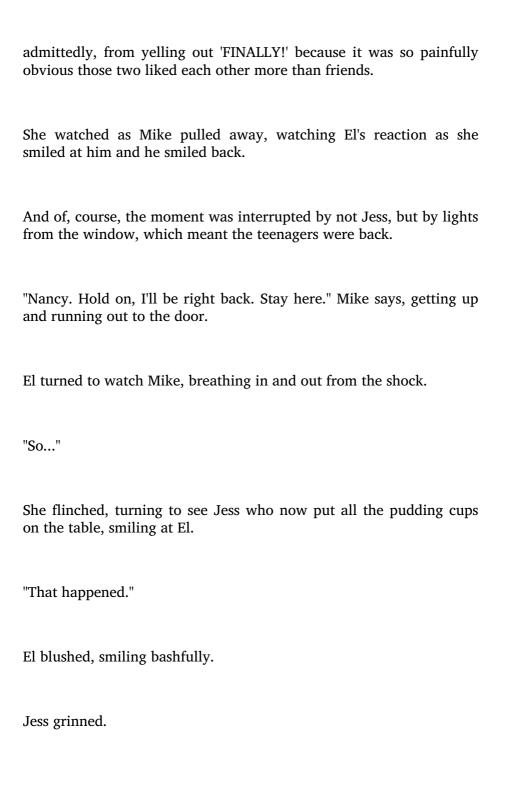
"Now, I'm going to go and deliver this pile of chocolate pudding to the lunch room. I can't wait to see what El's reaction is to chocolate pudding."

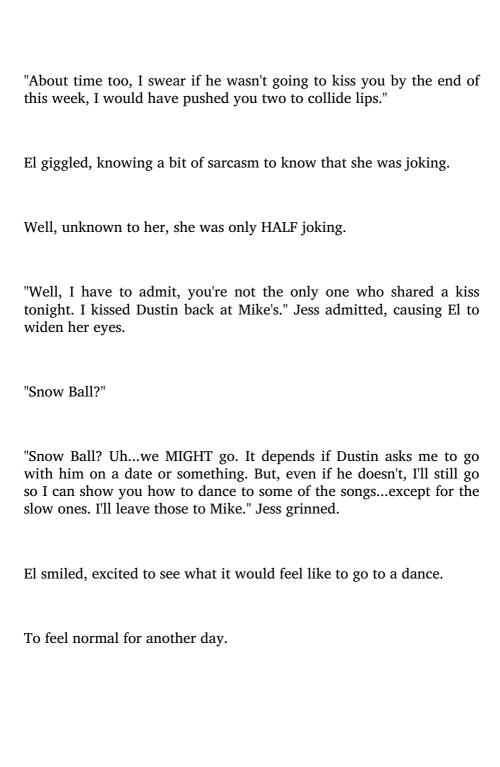
Dustin nods, smiling at her.

She turns to leave, walking towards the doorway when she froze, her jaw dropping at the sight she saw...

Mike kissing El.

She bit her tongue HARD, to keep from exclaiming in shock and,





24. Chapter 24

Summary for the Chapter:

"Goodbye, Mike...Jessie."

Dustin and Lucas plopped the chocolate pudding on the table, Jess already gone through her 3rd cup by the time they brought them in.

"This will charge your battery right up, I'm telling you," Dustin says, Jess, giggling.

"Guys! Guys!"

Jess turned to see Mike, her eyebrows furrowing when she saw fear in his eyes.

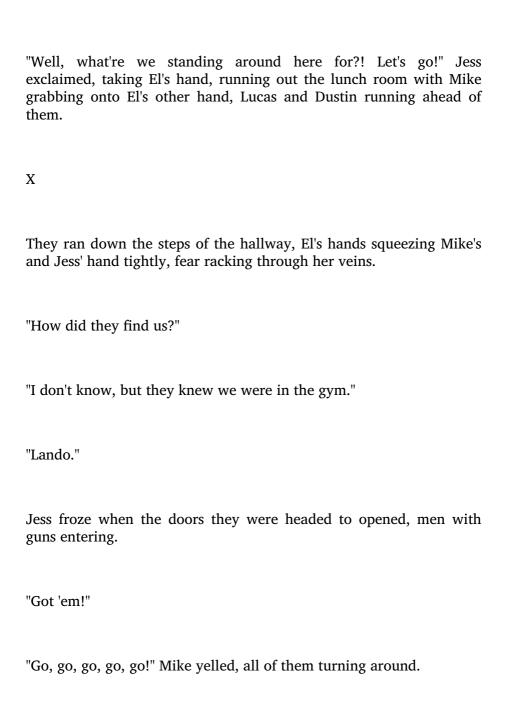
"What is it?" Lucas asked.

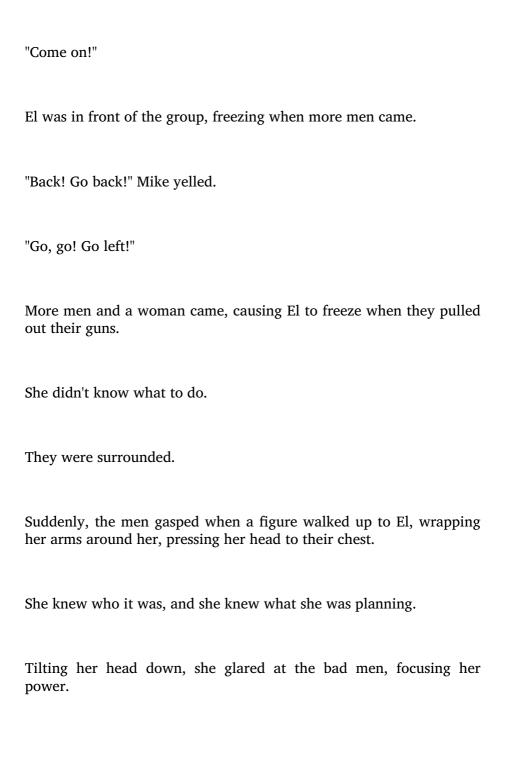
"They found us."

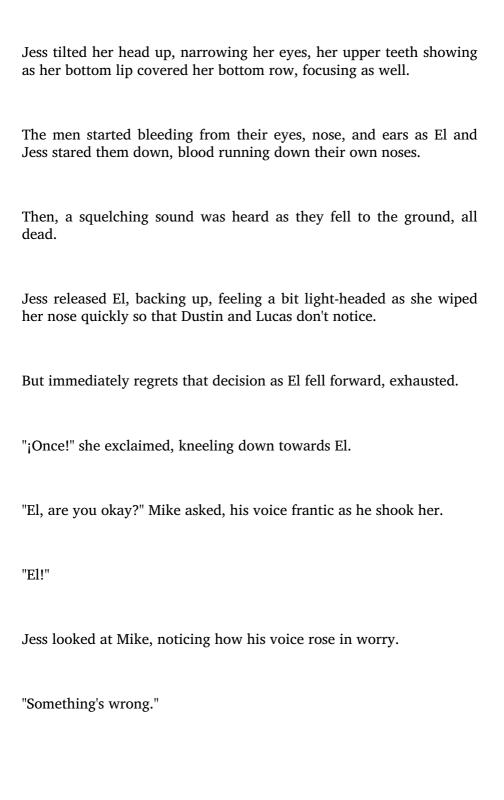
A clatter was heard when the pudding cup slipped from Jess' hand.

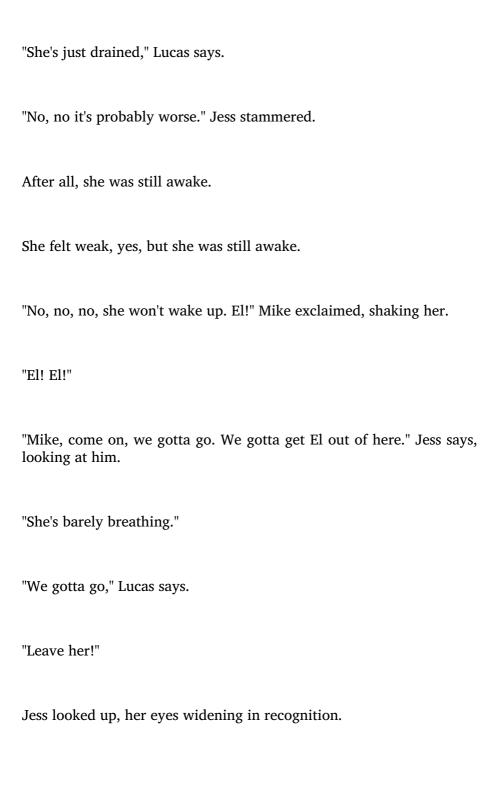
Her eyes widened and turned to El.

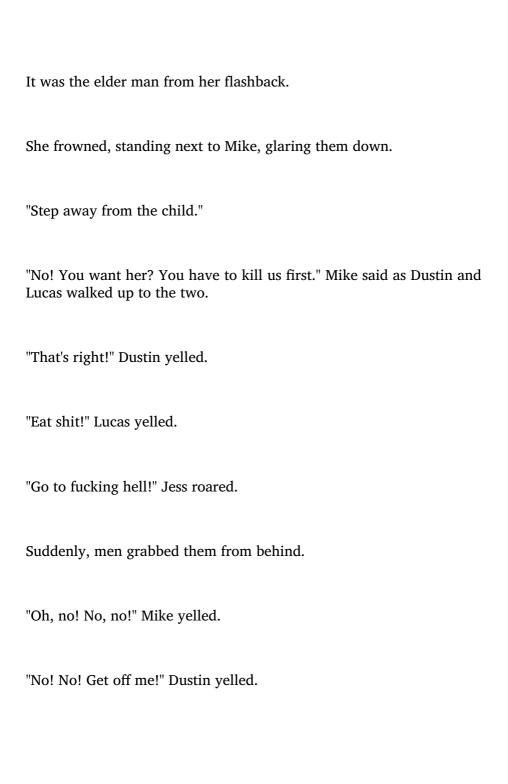
El looked to Jess in fear.

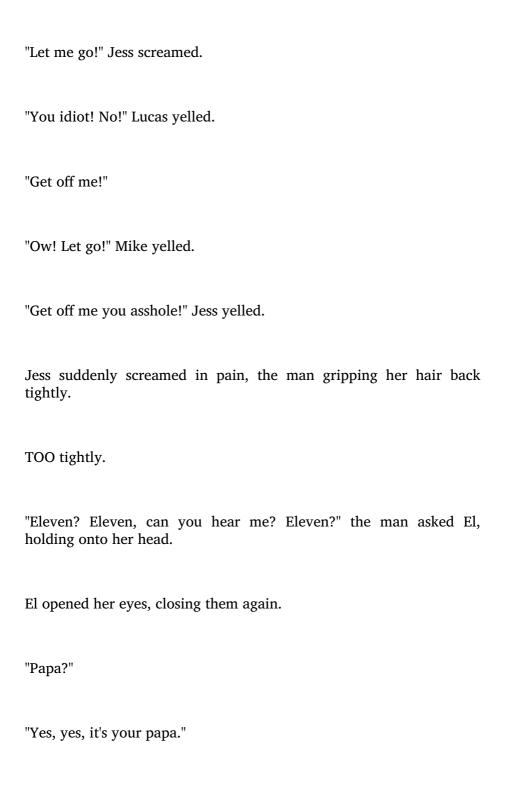


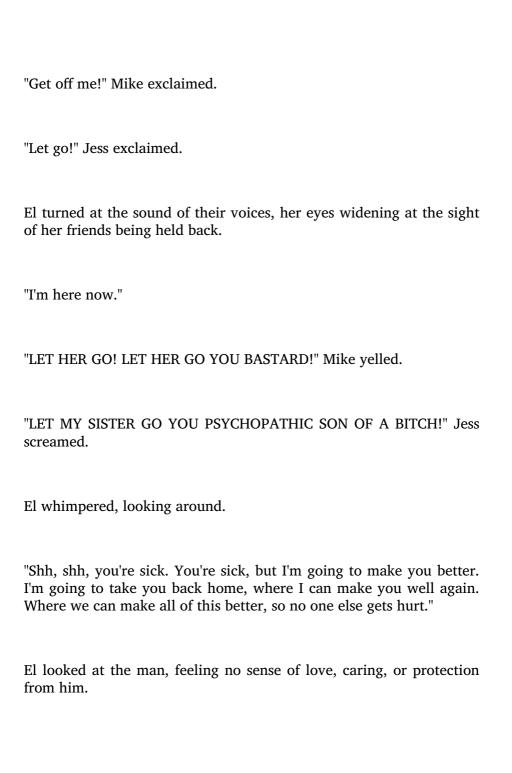


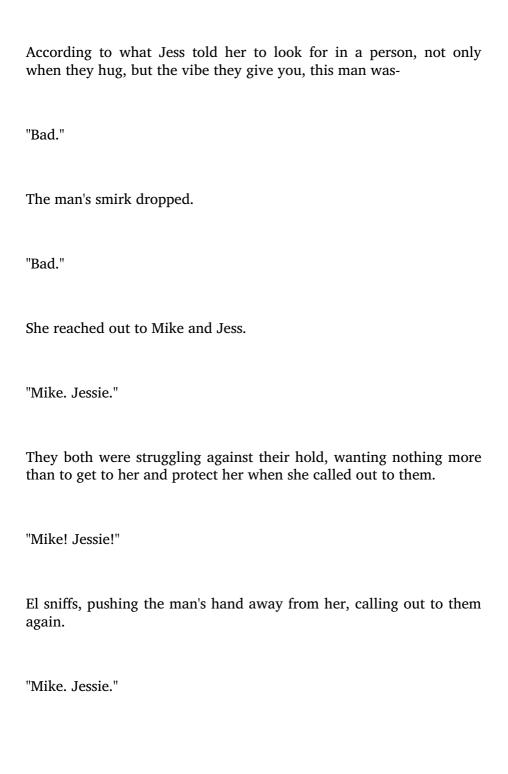


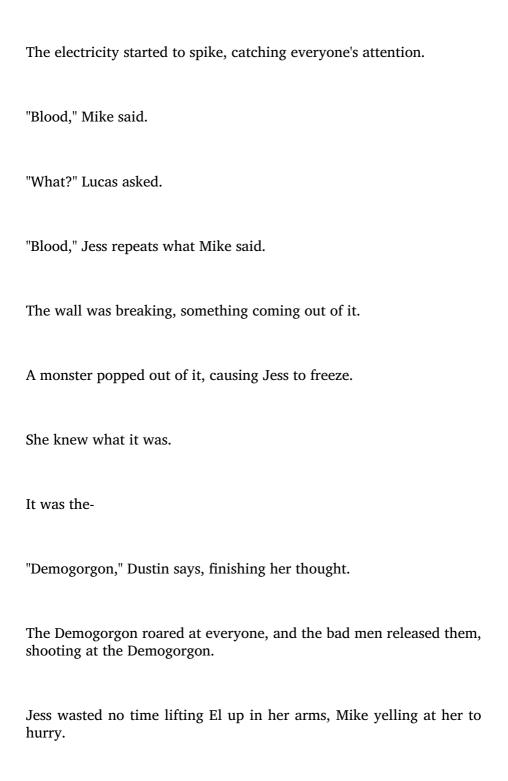


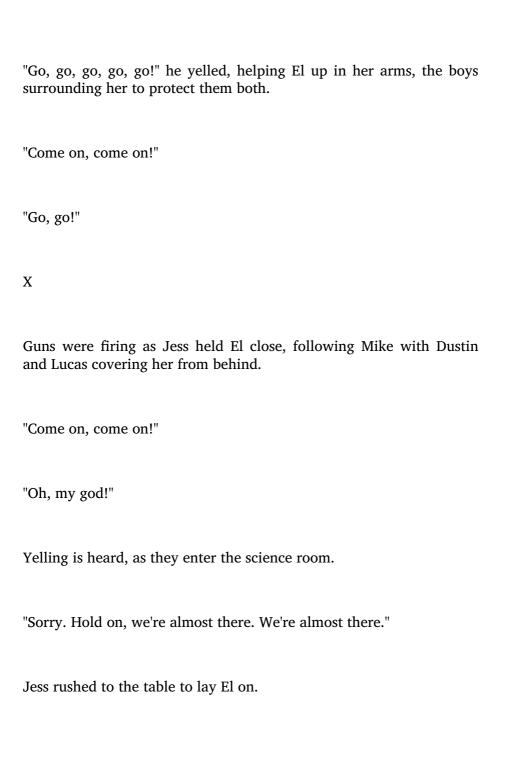


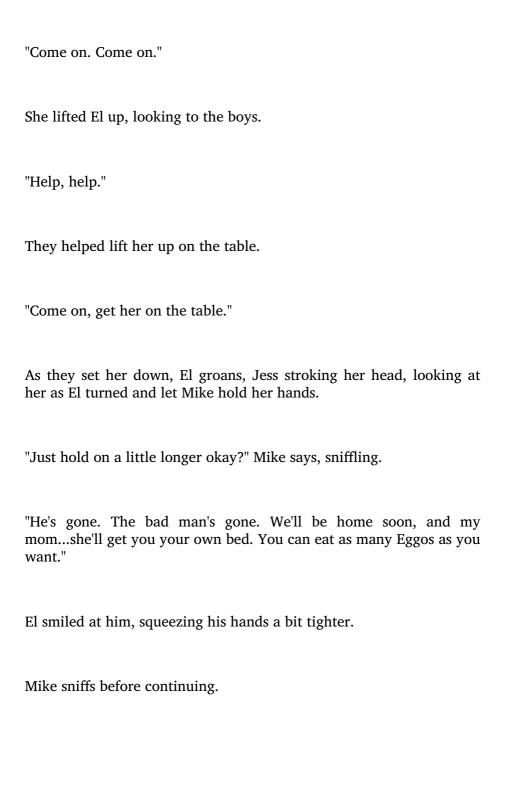


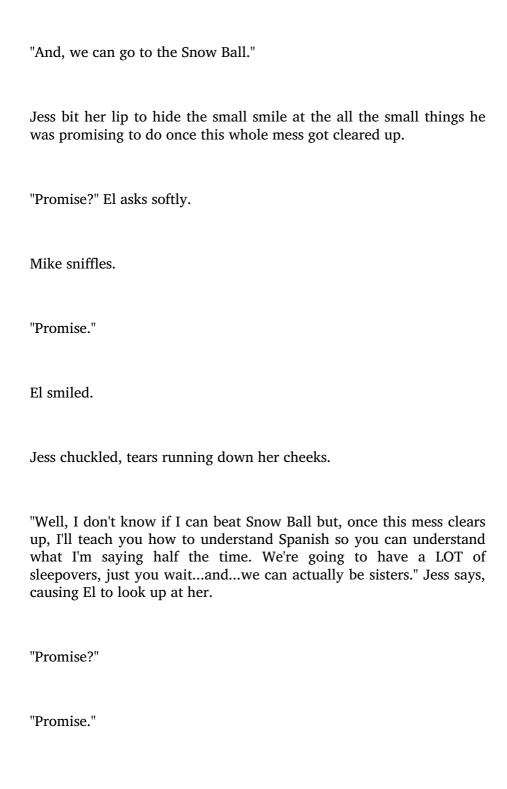


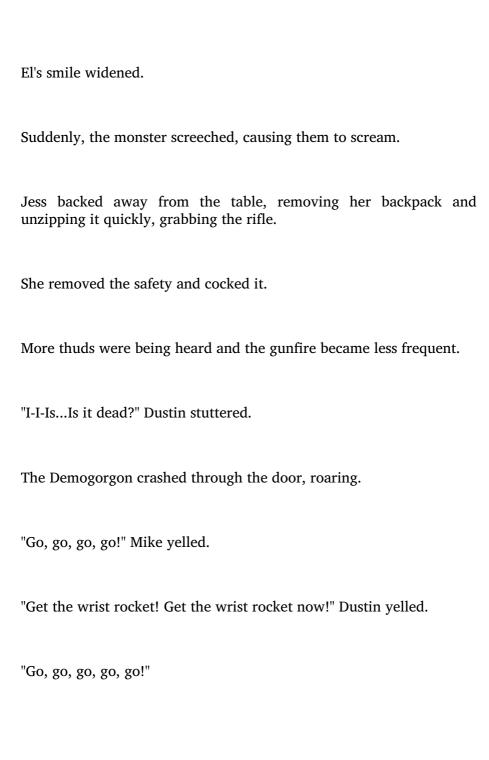


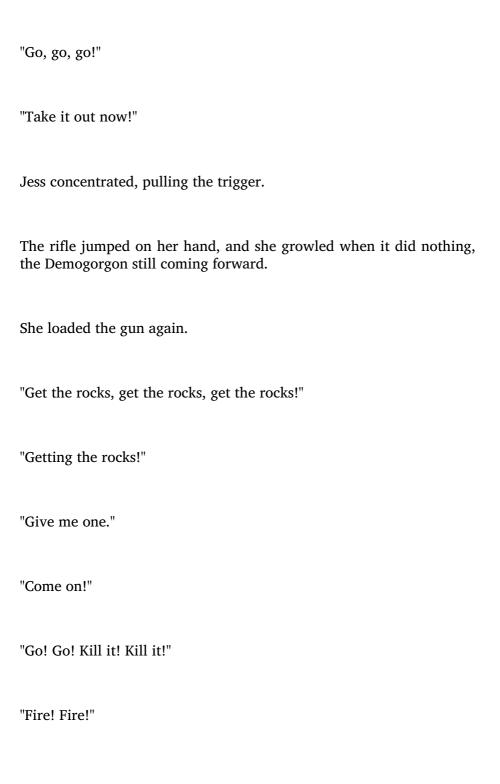


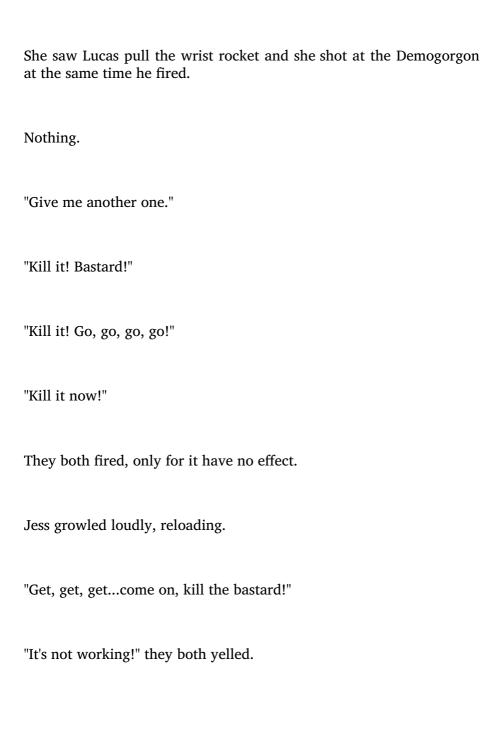


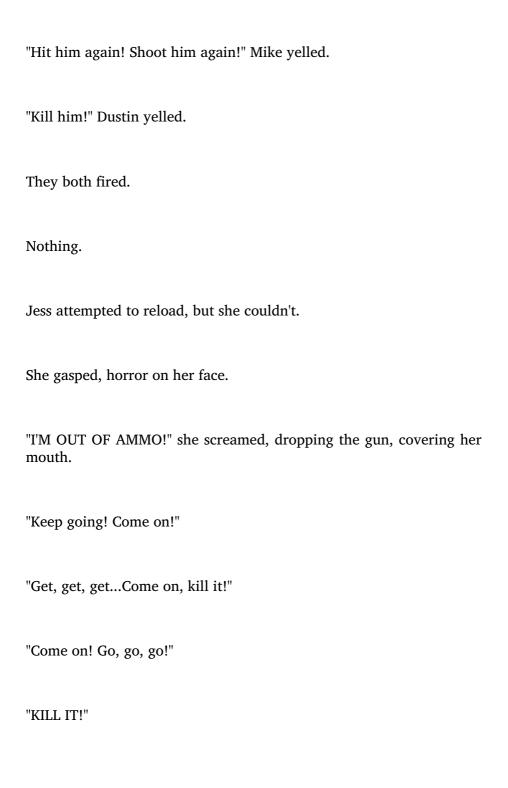


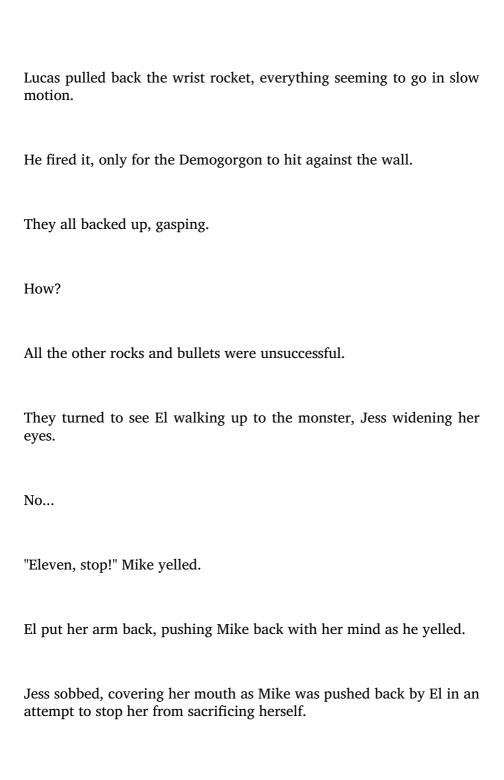












She knew what El was going to do, but she didn't care.

She ran towards El, grabbing her arm.

"¡ONCE, POR FAVOR, NO!"

El sniffed before she pushed Jess back, a tear running down as she heard her shriek as she was dragged against the floor, hitting the cupboard next to Mike.

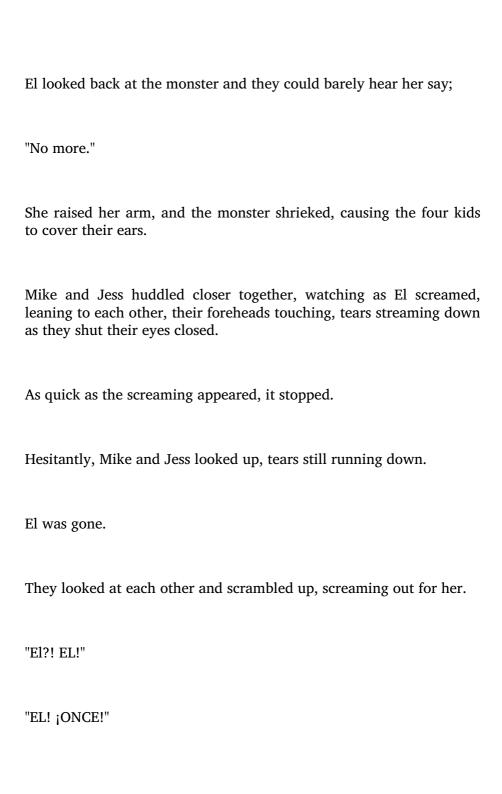
Jess shrieked as the feeling of being pushed back against her will overcame her body, sliding on the floor and hitting the cupboard next to Mike.

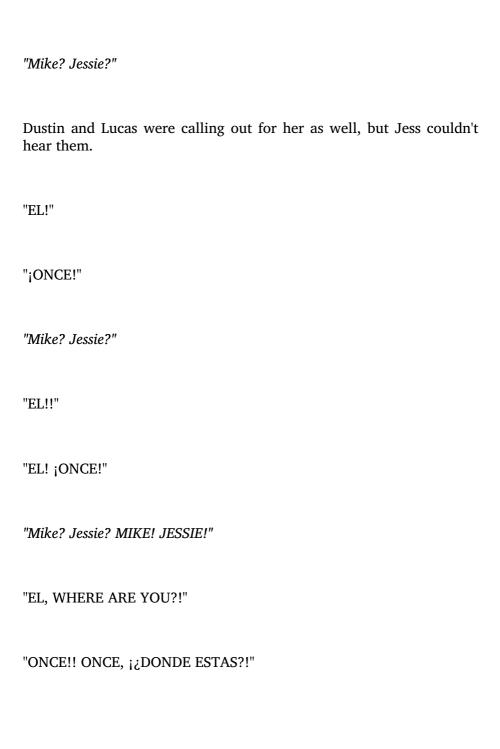
They looked at each other and looked to El, who was staring at the monster she had pinned against the wall, writhing in pain. She turned to look at her friends, tears silently streaming down her cheeks.

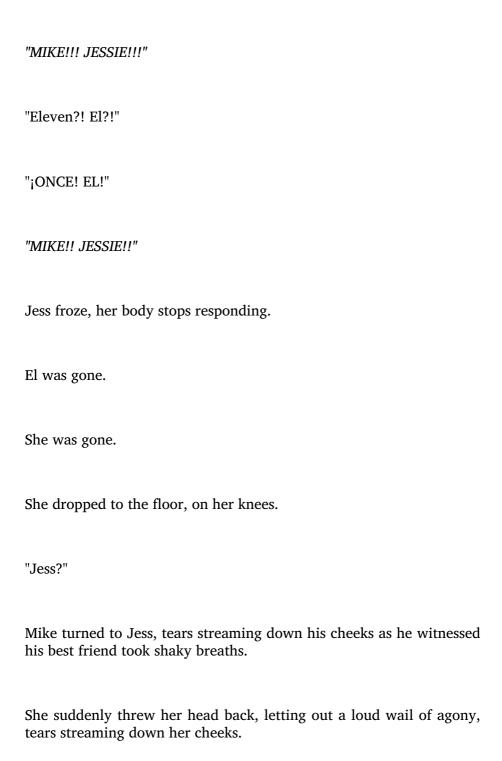
Mike and Jess were crying as well, both of them clutching each other's hands tightly, their bracelets pressed onto each other.

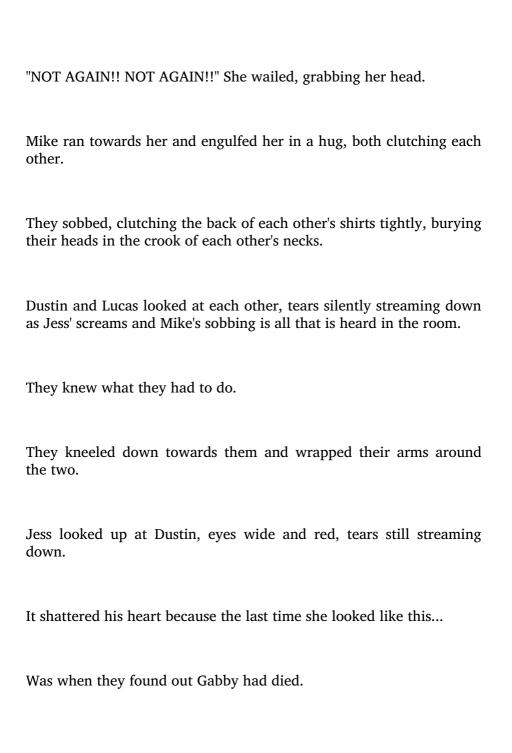
"Goodbye, Mike...Jessie."

Jess covered her mouth and let out a shaky sob, Mike letting his tears run down silently.









All he did was hug tighter, plopping his head on top of her's.

They heard shouting from outside, causing them to look up, releasing each other from the hug.

Jess tucked her necklace under her shirt and pulled down her flannel sleeve to hide her bracelet.

She wiped her tears, breathing in and making her perfect poker face.

The boys watched with sadness in their eyes on how easily she was able to produce the poker face.

She placed her gun (that had no ammo now) in her backpack and slid

it on.

She held hands with Mike and Dustin as the Bad Men entered the room, giving them the glare she learned from El, which made them back off a bit.

But that didn't stop them from addressing her as if she was one of them.

"Miss. Hernandez, under the orders of your parents, you're coming with us."

She hardened her glare and simply answered;

"No."

25. Chapter 25

Summary for the Chapter:

The Party reunites with Will, and they talk about El. A month later, they're playing Dungeons and Dragons in Mike's basement, like old times...only, things feel different.

Mike and Jess were sitting on an ambulance car, a blanket covering both of them.

Jess had tears running down her cheeks as she rubbed her necklace, rubbing the word *ONCE* over and over again.

Mike had his head laid on her shoulder, tears streaming down his cheeks as he held onto her hand tightly, as if he would lose her too.

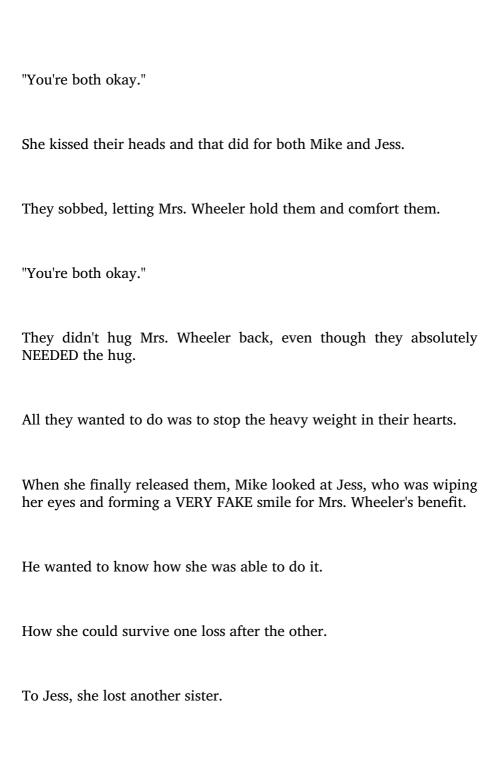
"Michael. Jessica."

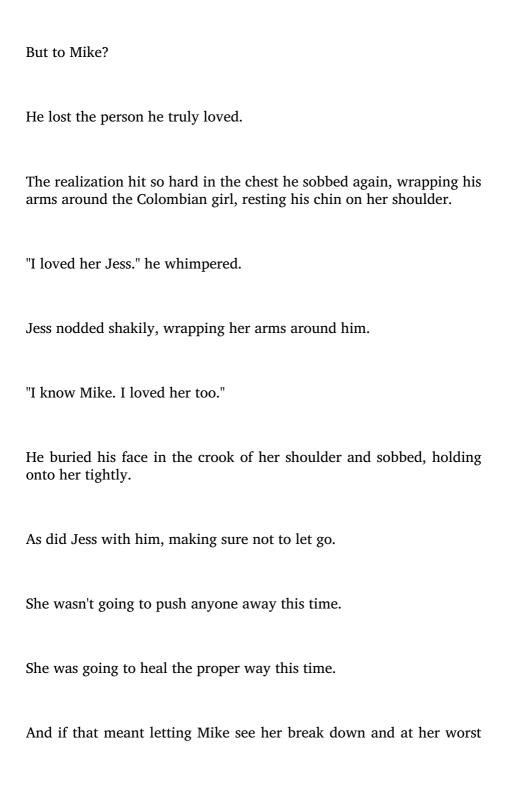
Jess looked up to see Mrs. Wheeler walking up to them, Mike lifting his head.

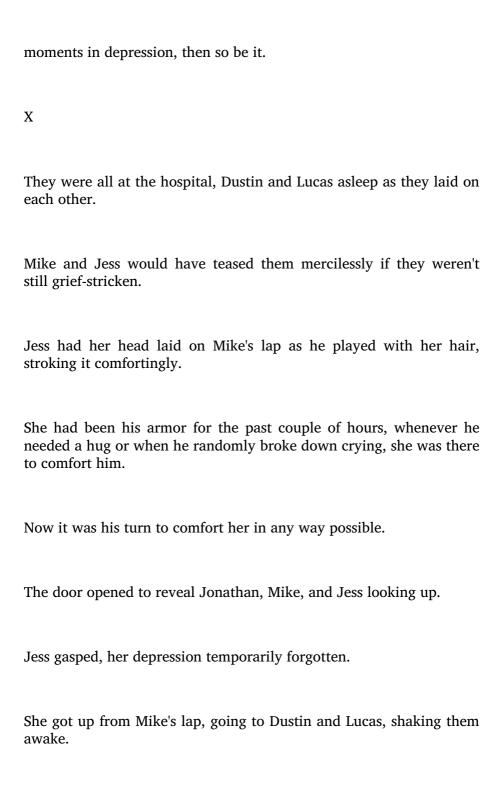
"Oh, my god." she sobbed, walking towards them.

"Oh, my god."

She grabbed Mike and Jess, pulling them into a big hug.







"Guys, Guys, he's up. Will is up. Guys, Will's up." Mike exclaimed, shaking them awake as well. $\,$

Lucas and Dustin whined as they woke up, jolting away from each other as Mike and Jess ran to the room.

"Guys, come on!" Mike exclaimed, his depression also being forgotten momentarily.

They all ran to the room, Mike opening the door to see Will awake.

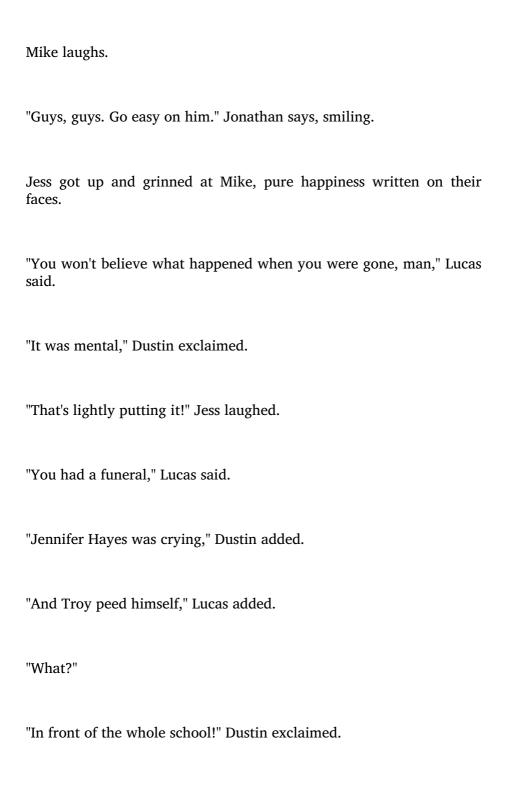
"Byers!" Mike exclaimed, running to Will and plopping his head on his body, hugging him.

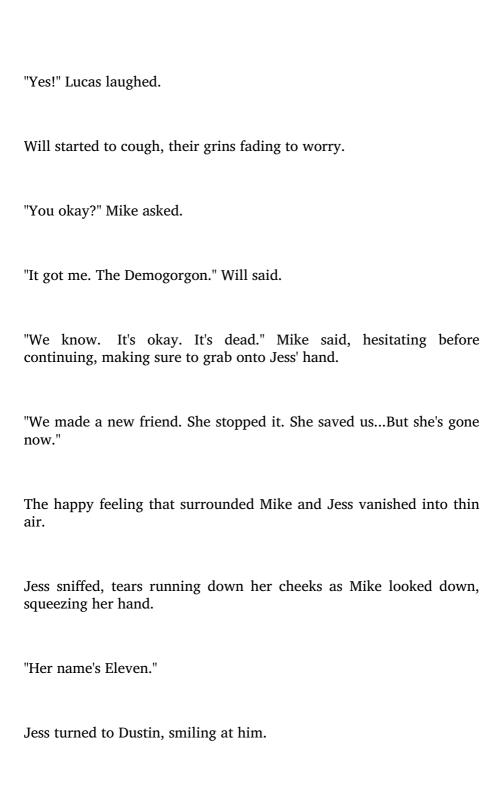
Lucas did the same, Mike placing his hand on his back.

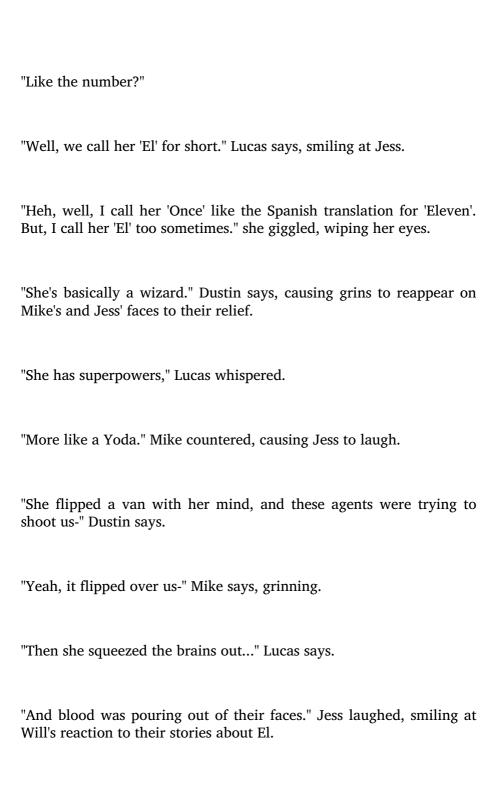
"Be careful. Be careful with him." Joyce says, smiling at them.

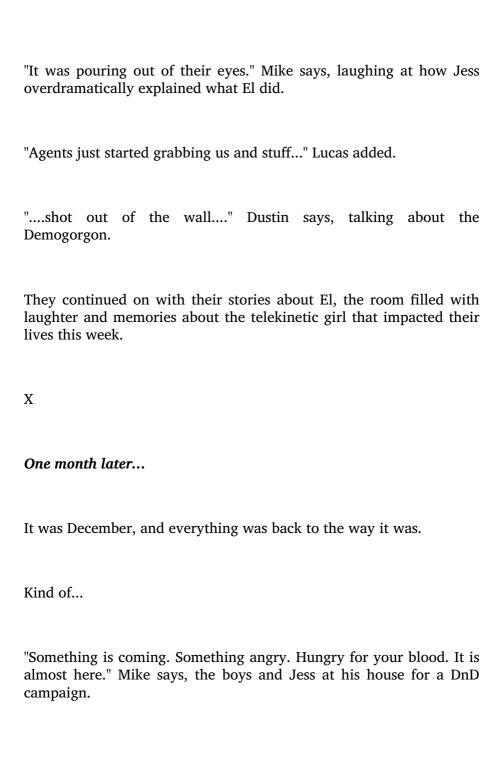
"Move!" Dustin exclaimed.

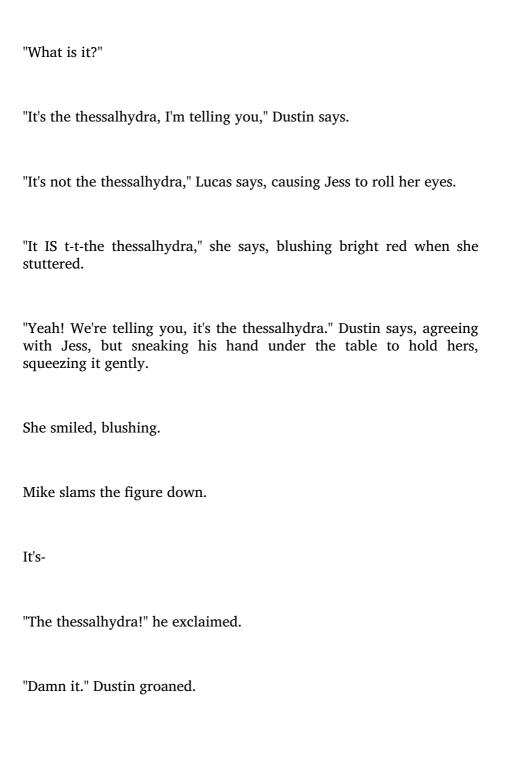
"Move aside!" Jess laughed as they both pushed Mike and Lucas away, plopping onto his body as Will pats them both on the back.

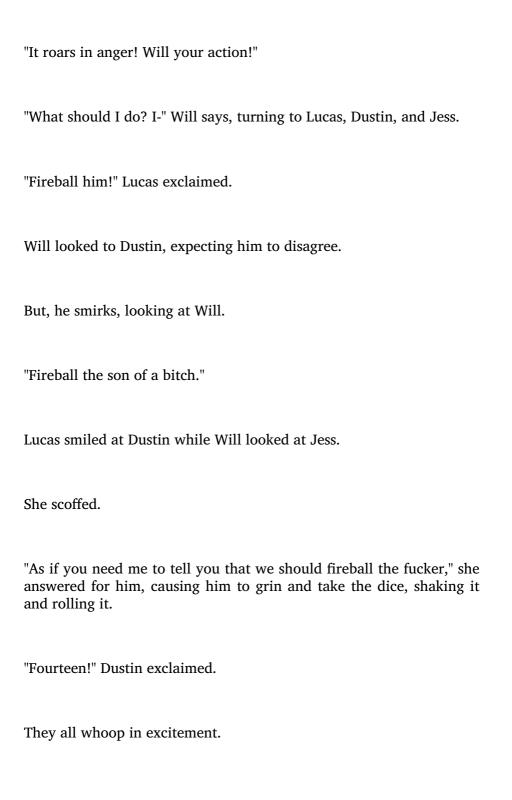


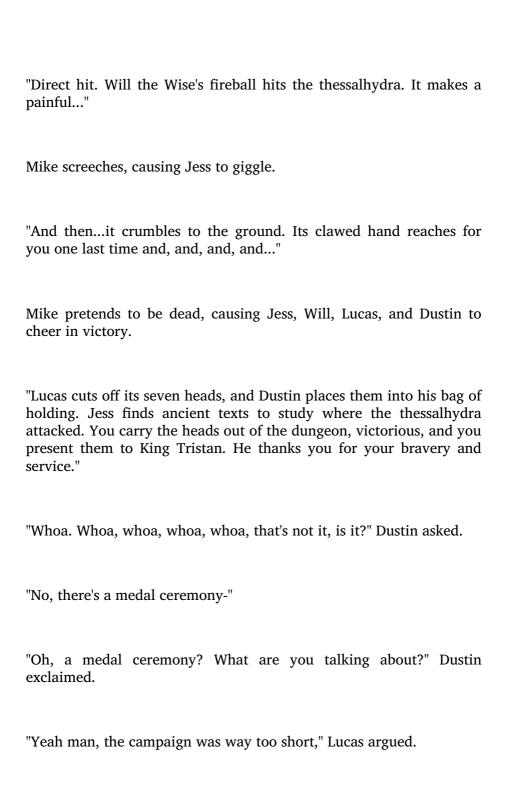


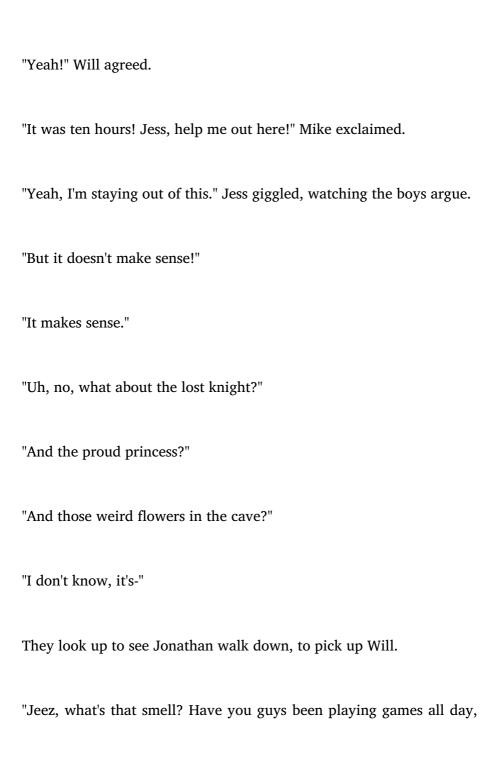


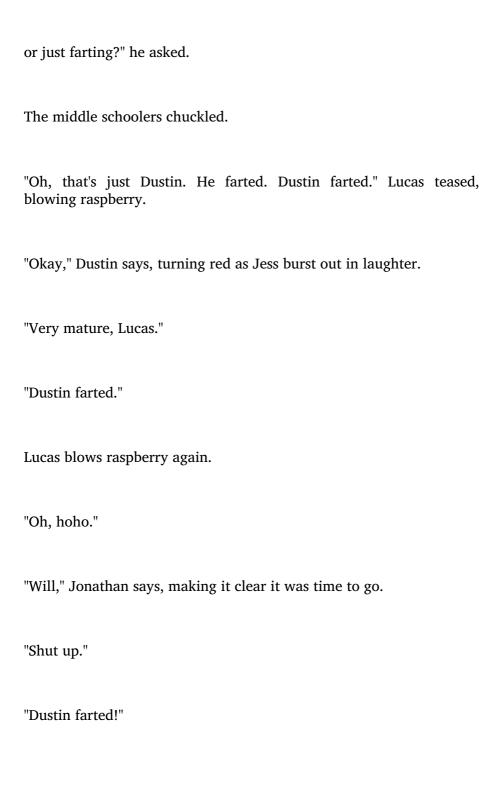


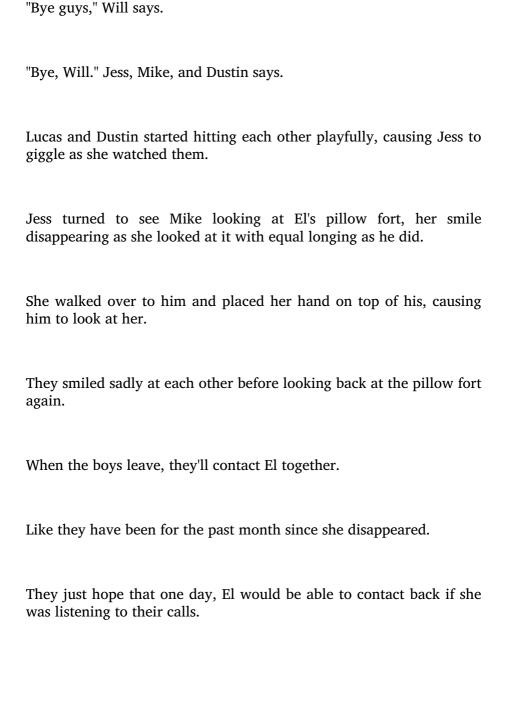


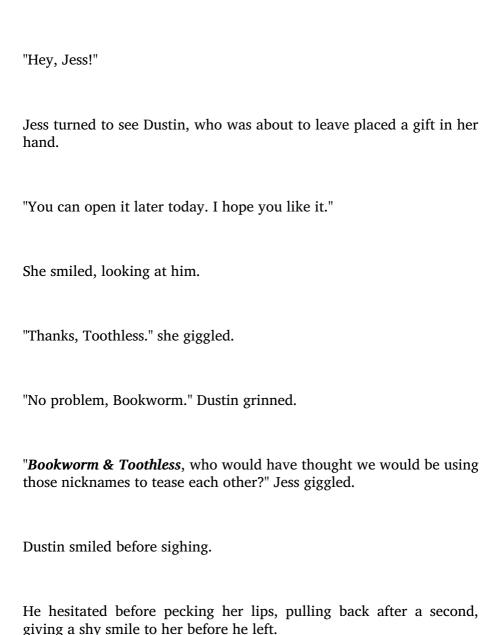


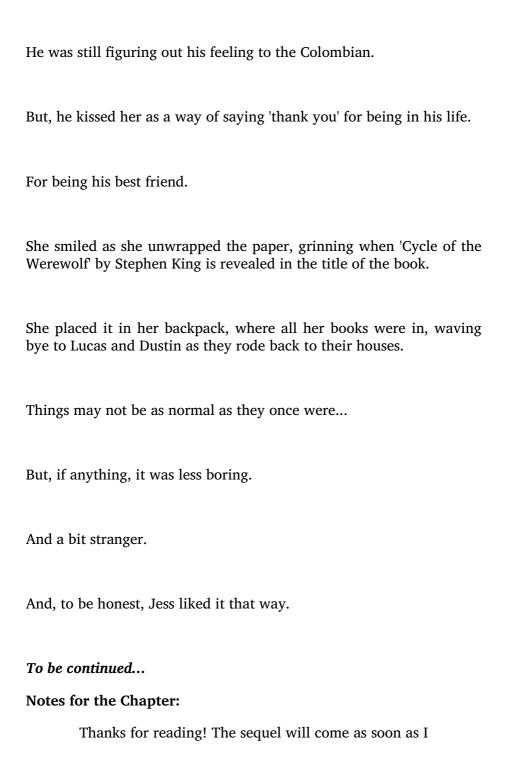












finish writing it! Hoped you liked it!